



No. CXLVI.]

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If you had all the **KNOWLEDGE, HONOUR, WEALTH,** or the **HIGHEST SOCIAL POSITION OF THIS WORLD** at your command, you must be measured by the **HEART,** which **SHOULD BE HUMBLE, HONEST, and KIND,** for this

IS NOBILITY OF MAN!

'The First Test of a truly Great Man is his Humility.'—RUSKIN.



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LONGMAN'S MAGAZINE.

DECEMBER 1894.

An Arranged Marriage.

BY DOROTHEA GERARD,

AUTHOR OF 'LADY BABY,' 'A QUEEN OF CURDS AND CREAM,' &C.,
AND JOINT-AUTHOR OF 'REATA,' &C.

CHAPTER V.

THE CONSPIRACY.

'I HOPE to goodness, Thomas, that you will never go out walking in the dark again,' was Mrs. Brand's tearful comment upon yesterday's events. 'Such a turn as the whole thing has given me, and I believing all the time that you were going no farther than the post-office! You *did* go to the post-office, by the way, did you not?'

Mr. Brand first put his thumb and forefinger to his forehead and then felt all his pockets in turn.

'Yes, I did go to the post-office,' he slowly remarked, 'and what's more, they gave me a letter, but where the deuce ——' He tried his pockets over again. 'Surely I've never gone and left it in that old ruin over there! It was a big letter in Annie's handwriting and with something heavy inside.'

'Her new photograph,' gasped Mrs. Brand, tremulous with excitement. 'Can you have dropped it on the road, Tom—Thomas, I mean?'

But Mr. Brand shook his head. His memory had meanwhile come to his aid, showing him quite plainly the corner of

the carved shelf beneath the dim Venetian mirror, on which he had laid down the letter last night while emptying his damp pocket. Unless Giacomo had been near the spot it would still be lying there unchanged. This would entail a second walk over to the Monastero—a huge bore of course—or was it a welcome excuse? He could not immediately make up his mind upon this point. The awe-stricken curiosity with regard to the Principessa which had taken possession of him was far from stilled, and in this way, and in spite of no word having been said about repeating his visit, he would be almost forced to see her again.

That same afternoon Mr. Brand stood again at the gate of the Monastero. There had been no difficulty about getting a guide; every lad in the village knew the way by light as well as by dark. Last night he had made an unnecessary circuit; had it not been for the detestable walking, the old palace among the hills could have been easily reached within an hour.

The gate was once more locked and barred, and though it was broad daylight, Giacomo looked almost as astonished at the visitor as he had looked last night, and followed him almost as suspiciously, as Mr. Brand mounted the broad staircase. It was still with Giacomo at his heels that he lifted the battered and blotted letter from off the carved shelf—for his memory had told him true—and once more descended to the hall.

Beside the door to the left of the entrance he stood still for a moment and appeared to be considering; then, with an access of almost jaunty courage, he opened it and walked boldly in. He felt certain that he would find the Principessa where he had left her that morning, and he was right. She sat there exactly as though she had not changed her attitude during the last six hours.

‘I hope my coming isn’t unpleasant to you,’ began Mr. Brand, without preliminary. ‘I didn’t mean to call, but I left this here behind me, so there was nothing for it but to fetch it, you see. You’ll excuse me, won’t you, if I take a look, just in order to —’

Mr. Brand, who had torn open the envelope, uttered an exclamation, and walked quickly to the window holding a cabinet photograph in his hand. The Principessa watched him without any remark.

It was the latest photograph of Annie, and it took Mr. Brand entirely by surprise. He had not seen her for a year. She had been a child then; it seemed almost as though this year had made of her a woman. The picture showed no more than head and shoulders, but even this was enough to tell that her form had rounded and her expression ripened.

Mr. Brand gazed at his daughter's face and felt strangely moved. A sudden feeling of elation had begun by taking possession of him, but immediately it gave way to doubt. He had a profound distrust of his own taste; how could he decide what claims to good looks his daughter had, since he could not even venture to choose a coat without consulting some safe adviser! No doubt it would be an immense simplification of his plans if she were to turn out fairly handsome. He felt the necessity of having the point decided for him at once.

When, after a long pause, he looked up, he discovered that the Principessa was watching him, and immediately he was visited by an idea.

'Look here,' he began, a trifle diffidently, 'you're what is called a woman of the world, are you not?'

'And supposing I am?'

'Supposing you are, you would oblige me greatly by taking a look at this picture of my daughter. I'm very badly in want of an opinion, and I'll go away again directly you've told me what you think of her.'

The old Principessa looked at her visitor as though she were weighing the pros and cons of the matter. Finally she put out her hand for the photograph. When she had glanced at it she began to feel about for her gold-rimmed eyeglasses. During more than a minute she contemplated the photograph in silence, while Mr. Brand anxiously watched her face.

'Your daughter?' she remarked at last, in quite a new tone of interest.

'Yes; I told you that I had a girl at school.'

'So you did. But why did you not tell me that she was beautiful?'

'Because I did not know it myself. It certainly struck me that she seemed all right, but I never can trust to my own taste.'

Mr. Brand had turned scarlet with excitement.

'Do you mean to say that she is actually a beauty? I half suspected it myself, but I couldn't be sure till I had asked somebody. And you've seen lots of pretty girls in your day, haven't you?'

'Yes,' answered the Principessa thoughtfully. 'I have seen many girls and many women, and if this picture speaks true there were few among them more beautiful than your daughter.'

She was still holding the photograph in her hand and examining it with evident pleasure. The outlines of the face before her

were of a most perfect and pure simplicity ; instead of the fashionable touzle over the eyebrows, which the Principessa particularly detested, the shining hair was parted soberly above the white forehead. Great, serious eyes looked straight out of the picture, from under eyebrows that were scarcely curved. Despite the childish roundness of chin and cheeks, it was an earnest face, and the face of a woman already.

‘Why, you spoke of her as of a mere schoolgirl,’ said the Principessa with more animation, ‘but this is something quite different.’

She laid down the photograph and fell once more to contemplating the empty fireplace, with her hands in her lap. Mr. Brand had been invited to take a rest before returning to the Curhaus. Elated by the Principessa’s remarks, he began to talk about Annie. She did not seem always to be listening. Now and then she took up the picture, which lay at her elbow, and looked at it attentively.

‘It is a good face,’ she once remarked, ‘not only a beautiful one.’

She laid down the picture and took it up again. It seemed almost as though she could not part from it. Presently she began to ask questions regarding the exact colour of the girl’s hair and eyes. Mr. Brand was not quite certain, but he fancied Annie’s eyes were some sort of brown—at least, they had always given him that impression.

‘Brown? And her hair as well? Then she is not one of your British *blondes*?’

There was almost a tinge of disappointment in the Principessa’s tone. ‘And her complexion—what impression did that give you?’

Mr. Brand racked his brains for a few seconds.

‘Have you ever seen a shell—the sort of shells one picks up at home—the *inside* I mean, of course? Well, Annie’s face has often made me think of the inside of a sea-shell.’

‘That would do,’ said the Principessa, with the photograph still in her hand. ‘When do you expect her?’

‘Expect her! Bless me, what for? I wouldn’t know what to do with her. Why, she’s only seventeen.’

‘I was married at sixteen,’ remarked the Principessa gently.

‘Were you really? Now, that’s strange. But Annie’s an English girl. Eighteen will be time enough for getting her home. I’ve calculated that by next year her manners ought to be quite safe; no more danger of taking after either me or her

mother. I don't mean to lose time, as it is. I've been looking out for a husband for her all summer.'

'And have you found one?'

'No,' said Mr. Brand, and then sank into sudden silence. He was debating within himself whether to say more or not. The Principessa's tone was now distinctly more gracious than it had been in the morning. Should he take advantage of this?

'It isn't easy to find a husband for Annie,' he slowly began.

'I should have thought it was very easy.'

'Not the sort of husband I want.'

And after that Mr. Brand, to his own astonishment, began unburdening his heart. He had felt the weakness coming upon him for some minutes now, and it was with a curious mixture of shame and pleasure that he yielded himself up, almost without a struggle. He knew himself well enough to understand what it was that had worked upon him. Even the folds of lace upon the Principessa's head, and even her manner of handling her fan, had helped to create that atmosphere of social refinement which to him had hitherto been unattainable, and perhaps for this reason was irresistible. Fifty trifles had conspired against the one secret weak point which for so many years he had jealously shielded from the gaze of his fellow-workers. It might be despicable, but he could not hide from himself that to lay his difficulties before a real live princess was an experience which partook almost of rapture. Simultaneously he blushed for himself and yet revelled in the sensation.

He told her of his start in life and of his social ambition, dwelling upon the account of his wealth with so obvious and childish a relish that the display was scarcely offensive.

'Not that I had any particular genius for business,' he frankly explained, 'but I've always had a genius for having my own way, and that answers as well in business as in anything else, I fancy.'

The Principessa made no attempt to stem the current of his confidences. It seemed rather as though a discreet question dropped now and then were intended delicately to lead him on to further disclosures. She showed interest in his account of Farringdon, and inquired once or twice whether it was a mere ornamental *château*, or whether there were farms belonging to it. She also wished to know whether Mr. Brand, as a man of business, could advise her as to whether it were safer to invest money in shares or in land, and which of the two plans he himself adopted.

At this mark of confidence the last barriers of Mr. Brand's

reserve gave way. Very soon the Principessa knew as much about his inner life as he himself knew. She had immediately grasped that to this man life had always been a simple, though often a tough, job; that there had been many steep hills on his road, but no tortuous ways. The opinions she uttered were sometimes unexpected. Thus, when in telling her of the ball and of his disappointed hopes, he said:

‘I expected them to call in a body next day, and instead of that they went on avoiding me as carefully as though I had been a newly painted door. Where was the mistake? Was the display too great, as the *Blairnie Herald* had it?’

The Principessa replied:

‘On the contrary, it was not great enough. You should have paid two hundred pounds for the music instead of one hundred, and you should have lighted up three miles of avenue instead of two. A display of money often shocks people who have not got much money themselves, but you have only got to double it and society succumbs. Instead of being vulgar it becomes regal.’

Mr. Brand kept for ever returning to the subject of his daughter’s marriage. Would the husband he wanted for Annie be very hard to find? Now that the Principessa knew everything, what was her opinion on this point?

‘He will be hard to find,’ she said thoughtfully. ‘If you find him at all, it will be by some chance, for it requires to be a man who is free of social prejudice—who stands either above it or below it, as you choose to put it—and such men are not frequent even nowadays.’

‘I mean to find him all the same; I know he’s hiding somewhere.’

Mr. Brand had by this time left his place, and was treading heavily up and down the stone floor, scowling at the distant corners almost as though he suspected his future son-in-law of lying low in one of those gloomy recesses.

‘Pray tell me this one thing: Is your daughter to be at all consulted in this matter? Or do you intend to keep her at school until you have found the right man, and then send for her and say, “There is your husband!”’

‘That is exactly what I mean to do. You couldn’t have put it clearer. And it won’t be hard to do either; Annie’s a good, quiet sort of girl, and quite easy to manage.’

‘I perceive that British liberty does not suit you—in others, Signor Brand. Your plan has much sense in it.’ She paused for

an instant, and then added, 'I also was not consulted in these matters. Perhaps you do not know that in our country it is the custom for the parents to arrange the marriages, and not the children.'

'Then her parents might have done better for her than marrying her to a beggar with a big name,' said Mr. Brand to himself as he looked round the grim, bare room. 'I believe she's been a beauty in her day. Why, she's a beauty now!'

It seemed almost as though the Principessa had guessed the drift of his thoughts. A shade of colour mounted to her forehead as she spoke.

'You must not suppose that this apartment has always worn the face which it wears to day. The fortunes of the house of Roccattelli have not always been such as they are now. Within these same four walls that now appear to you so naked I and my dead husband have lived in comfort, almost in luxury.'

Mr. Brand had stood still, straight opposite to the water-colour portrait on the wall.

'Is that your late husband?' he asked, overmastered by a fresh spasm of curiosity.

'No,' said the Principessa gently, 'that is my son.'

'You have got a son?'

Mr. Brand's tone expressed unbounded astonishment. Taken in the abstract there was nothing startling in the idea of the Principessa having a son; nevertheless, so complete was the impression of solitude conveyed by the woman and her surroundings, that such a possibility had never occurred to Mr. Brand. In the first instant he felt even instinctively inclined to disbelieve the statement.

'I never knew that you had a son.'

The Principessa smiled a little coldly. 'Yesterday at this time you did not know that I was in the world.'

'And is he here?'

'My son? He is not here. He is serving in the Austrian Army. He is a lieutenant. That picture was painted when he was fifteen.'

As she glanced up at her visitor their eyes met for a moment, then hers returned to the fireplace, and his to the portrait on the wall. He had not looked at it attentively before. The lad's face was thin and eager, with a slender and singularly expressive throat, and long-cut dark eyes that might have been the eyes of a woman.

Mr. Brand resumed his walk upon the flagstones, but he

moved more slowly now, and the current of his talk had suddenly run dry.

The Principessa began to make the first entirely conventional remarks which Mr. Brand had yet heard from her lips—remarks about the weather and the temperature. She also asked some questions about the Curhaus, and did not appear to notice when he forgot to answer them. The chief subject of the past conversation was not again touched upon that day.

Mr. Brand went home with the photograph in his pocket, and with a great many thoughts in his mind. During four days he spoke less than ever to his wife, and took solitary walks. On the third day he made a few inquiries of the doctor, who spoke a little English. He asked what was the reason of the Principessa's seclusion. The doctor answered with some reserve and a little *pique*. She was an invalid, he believed, but he knew nothing of the nature of her malady, seeing that he had never been called upon to treat her. A widow? Yes, she was a widow, and had an only son. Unmarried? Undoubtedly; the young Principe was not more than twenty-three, and not in a position to marry the first girl who happened to please him, owing to his want of fortune.

On the following day the Principessa, sitting in her accustomed seat, and busied with her accustomed thoughts, was roused by a heavy step crossing the library. She sat up to listen with a shade of expectation on her face. She thought to recognise the step; it was not Giacomo's. Within the same minute Mr. Brand pushed aside the heavy curtain and came towards her, with a certain something, almost of solemnity, about his broad, carefully shaved chin. She saw at a glance that he had put on his very best clothes, and while he was still advancing she had time to reflect that he was much more objectionable in black clothes than he had been in creased linen.

Her greeting was stiff to the verge of coldness. Mr. Brand replied to it somewhat uncertainly. Up to the very threshold of the room he had held his head high, but now his heavy step faltered a little. That old woman with the silver curls and the long, white fingers was so entirely the embodiment of that social idol which he had worshipped behind closed doors since his childhood that even to step into her presence was enough to make him turn mentally giddy. At this moment it required the whole of his sturdy resolution to keep him from turning and flying.

As soon as he was seated he began talking with a sort of plunge. He started by telling her that he had come over this

time purely on a matter of business. He had spent these four days in weighing the matter which he now wished to lay before her. Possibly she had already guessed his intention? Had she any objection to his going on?

The Principessa said not a single word and made no sign, and Mr. Brand proceeded, growing more fluent as he talked.

'The matter is very simple, as you will see; I fancy the less words I use about it, the better. You have got a son and I have got a daughter; your son has got a title, and my daughter has got a fortune. Your son will certainly require a fortune in order to enjoy his title comfortably, and I am determined, for purposes of my own, that my daughter shall get a title. Do you follow me? What do you think, eh? Don't you think we could come to an understanding?'

The Principessa sat so still and stared so straight in front of her that it was hard to say whether or not she had heard a word of his address.

Mr. Brand began to grow perplexed.

'Maybe I have not been quite plain enough. What I meant to say was——'

'You have been quite plain enough,' said the Principessa, opening her lips at last.

It was not because she was astonished that she had been silent so long—indeed, she had scarcely been astonished; what surprise she felt was not due to the thing itself, which for four days she had seen coming, but only to the abruptness with which it had come. The idea was good, but it required ripening, as also did her own resolution. She knew very well that the first word she uttered must necessarily colour her whole course of action for the future. It was open to her to play either the coy and uncomprehending mother or the indignant aristocrat. From under her eyelashes she watched the man she had to deal with, and decided to do neither. While he talked she was not listening, but only observing. She said to herself, 'This man is honest only in the lower, rougher sense of the word, but, nevertheless, honesty will be the best policy with him.' It was then that she broke silence.

'You have been quite plain enough, my friend, and it is right so. I will not affect to misunderstand you. We are both old people, and we have fought our part of life's battle, therefore we can afford to do without the flowers of speech. You wish to unite your daughter's fortune to the title of my son; the plan has much

in its favour, very much indeed, but we must review the situation soberly. There may be obstacles.'

'I know there may. To begin with, you may object to the connection. I don't know what your ideas on this subject are.'

The Principessa smiled a little sadly.

'I will tell you what they are; listen.'

Though she said 'listen,' she sank into silence for some minutes, apparently lost in far-away thoughts. Maybe, also, this was the moment in which she struggled for the last time with her pride. Presently she roused herself and began to speak.

'It is a strange chance that has caused our paths to cross. You say that you are seeking a husband for your daughter, and I—how do you think that I have spent my hundreds of hours of solitude sitting before this grate, while the wind swept down the valley and bellowed in the chimney? I have spent them in planning how to save Luigi from undergoing what I have undergone.'

After a scarcely perceptible pause she went on, speaking more quickly.

'No one can ever guess at my sufferings. You will say that you also have known poverty, but poverty was your birthright; therefore you cannot understand what it means to be born in riches, educated for riches, to have held riches in your hand, and to be condemned to poverty. I will be open with you; the fortunes of this house had long been failing; my husband was also my cousin; I was married to him in order that my dowry should stem the current of ruin. It might have sufficed had my husband not been a gambler. He was in the Diplomatic Service, and capitals are as many spread gaming-tables to him who has the fever in his veins. When almost all was gone I persuaded him to come back here, the very last property that was still left to the family. He said the place would kill him, and I believe it did; but it saved the dry bread for Luigi, and that was all I wanted. In his last illness, whenever the shutters shook in the wind, he used to raise his head from the pillow, thinking to hear the rattle of dice; and sometimes he would start up in bed and stretch his hands towards the window and then fall back again, groaning when he perceived that that which he had taken to be a pack of cards flying towards him was only a drift of autumn leaves against the pane. He died when Luigi was still a child, and since his funeral I have not left the house. No doubt you have wondered at my seclusion and sought for reasons. There is no other reason but

poverty. I said to myself: Inside these walls I shall continue to reign sovereign, outside of them I should be a caricature. It is no one's business to remark that in my solitude I feed myself with chocolate pastilles instead of with meat, but it would be everyone's business to note that the covering of my carriage cushions is moth-eaten the moment I show myself on the high-road. So long as I remain invisible I shall be revered. The honour of the name of Roccatelli demands of me this sacrifice. I took my resolution not without a struggle, for at that time my hair was not yet white. When I came back from attending my husband's funeral, and when I heard the gate shut behind me, I told myself that for me it should not open again until it came to be my turn to be carried out in a wooden box. I gave out that my heart was broken by my husband's death and my health ruined. For more than a year past this moment had been marked by me as the most favourable for withdrawing from the world without exciting attention. That which followed showed that I was right: no one asks curious questions. Possibly I may be thought eccentric, but eccentricity is quite reconcilable with dignity. Everybody knows my name, though scarcely any have seen my person. I believe that by some I am even regarded as a fabulous personage.'

The Principessa reached for her fan and began slowly to fan herself. Mr. Brand held his breath, listening for more.

'I have suffered less—far less—than I did in the world outside. You cannot understand me. Every step in your life has been a step upwards, while I have ever moved downwards. You cannot—no, you cannot—guess at the degradation, the pain, the shame which that which people call "noble-born poverty" brings with it. I have gone through it all, and I have sworn that my son shall not go through it. He must be saved, against his will, if not with it. He himself is eager to take up the battle of life, but even should he leave the battlefield triumphant he will go thence deeply wounded, horribly scarred, and how can I know whether a loving hand will then be near to tend the bleeding wounds? This hand of mine will then have long lain cold. Therefore I say he must be saved, and it must be done before I die. A wife seems the only salvation, but every rich girl would not do. To give him a worthless wife would only be another way of making him unhappy. When I beheld your daughter's picture my heart leapt with hope, for I have learnt to read faces. You ask after my prejudices. I am not the

same woman that I was when I first sat down here to puzzle out the riddle. Twenty years ago I would not have believed a messenger from Heaven who told me that I should ever speak to anyone as I am speaking to you to-day. But all that is changed. Viewed from my hermitage, the world appears so distant and so small, even its greatest figures such puppets of Fate, and even its most honoured prejudices such childish caprice. I have built a new world for myself, and in it there are no prejudices, either social or national.'

'And has your son got any prejudices?'

'My son is a Socialist.'

'A Socialist?' repeated Mr. Brand, instinctively alarmed by the sound of the word, as are all well-ordered citizens, even when they have not got a perfectly clear idea of its meaning.

The Principessa shrugged her shoulders.

'What would you have? A young man with straight limbs and a good digestion must be something. Luigi happens to have got into a socialistic current. I have no objections because I have no fears, even though it may amuse him now to have plain "Lieutenant Roccattelli" printed upon his calling-cards. This is the general view of the case,' went on the Principessa in an entirely different tone. 'Now we should go to the particulars. What dowry do you intend to give your daughter, Signor Brand?'

'Two hundred thousand,' said Mr. Brand, promptly.

'And how much will she inherit after your death?'

'It won't be less than three hundred thousand.'

The Principessa kept her eyes fixed steadily upon the carpet, for she did not wish to betray the height of her exultation. She would have been satisfied with less—far less.

'In what is your money invested?'

Mr. Brand proceeded to give some explanations, the Principessa occasionally interrupting him with some question whose precision would not have shamed the most practical man of business. The question of the difference of religion being likewise thrown up, was dismissed as forming no serious obstacle in the case, thanks to Luigi's somewhat too advanced ideas.

'If I were entirely wise,' the Principessa remarked at last, fixing her keen eyes on Mr. Brand's face, 'I should first write to England for confirmation of your words, for, after all, I know nothing of you but what you have told me yourself. But I do not think that I am making a mistake. Let us look at the matter more closely still. The ages tally. One great point is to dis-

cover whether both young people are fancy free. The girl is probably safe so far. You told me, I think, that she has seen nothing of society? You might tell me a little more about the boarding-school. Have they got masters for any of the subjects?

'They've got a drawing-master and a dancing-master.'

'Have you seen these masters? Be so kind as to describe them to me.'

'The drawing-master,' began Mr. Brand, in complete incomprehension, 'is a German genius—at least so Miss Bellew says. She says it's a wonder he can draw so correctly with the awful squint he has. He does landscapes and——'

'That's enough,' interrupted the Princess. 'I do not require to know anything further about the German genius. Let us pass on to the dancing-master.'

'He's the uncle of the drawing-master.'

'Admirable! Miss Bellew must be a wonderfully wise woman. I think we may consider the girl safe. As for Luigi, of course I cannot entirely answer. He lives in the world and he is a man. But I require only to have him half an hour in the same room with me in order to know whether his affections are engaged. Let us take for granted that both parties in this transaction are heart-whole—it simplifies the argument. On the part of your daughter there will be national prejudices to overcome. Your nation is great, but its circle of mind is small. A man may be brave, generous, highly informed, but to you he is not a man if he holds his fork differently from the way in which you have decided that a fork should be held. In order to counteract these impressions it will require some management. It is fortunate that I have taught Luigi all the languages I know. The question now is, how exactly to put the matter in motion.'

Mr. Brand could see no difficulty there. He had only got to send for his daughter and tell her what to do. Naturally the Principessa would not hear of anything so clumsy.

'I can make my daughter do what I like,' said Mr. Brand, a little sulkily.

'And so can I make my son, but he must not know that he is doing it. Luigi demands delicate handling; his temper is hasty—what you English would call violent. The slightest sign of restraint suffices to make him grow restless. Two years ago I attempted to arrange a marriage for him with one of my own relation—sit had always been so in our family; but Luigi, boy though he was, had already become infected with modern ideas.

It was on that occasion that he declared his independence to my face, and it was that incident which made him decide upon entering the army. I could not immediately consent, but within that same year I let him go. There had arisen other reasons which made his absence from here appear desirable.'

The slight fold which always marked displeasure appeared between the Principessa's eyebrows as she spoke.

'It is indispensable that this arranged marriage should wear the mask of a love-match. Send for your daughter, by all means, and I will get my son home upon some pretext which I must still invent, and after that let matters take their natural course.'

When Mr. Brand still demurred, the Principessa, with wonderful patience and with an almost mathematical precision, proceeded to prove to him that her calculations could scarcely fail to come right. A young man and a young woman, of suitable ages, healthy in mind and body, both instinctively, if not consciously, on the look-out for an ideal—she could not think of anything whereto to liken Mr. Brand's doubts, if it were not a doubt, as to whether a lighted match brought close to a case full of gunpowder would cause this to explode. If the gunpowder were not damp and the match in working order they would simply have no choice.

The Principessa's concluding words were an ultimatum.

'I will undertake this matter only on condition that you leave the entire management in my hands. It will be best also if the arrangement remains between you and me. I think we understand each other.'

'And my wife? I shouldn't like to keep Polly out of the secret.'

'I haven't seen your wife yet,' said the Principessa, doubtfully.

'I can make her hold her tongue. I am quite sure of her.'

'Let it be, then,' said the Principessa with reluctant consent.

When Mr. Brand was gone she almost wished that she had been firmer on this point. She could not help reflecting that in the matter of silence she had never felt sure of any woman except herself.

Mr. Brand, on the contrary, went home in a state of elation which bordered upon intoxication.

'I knew the right man must be hiding somewhere,' he chuckled to himself at least twenty times within the hour.

CHAPTER VI.

A SCHOOLFELLOW.

ON a would-be rustic bench which stood at the end of an extremely well-weeded walk Annie Brand was sitting one July evening a little before sunset.

A scent of *mignonette* filled the air. The lawn on either side was faultlessly mown, and the pansy and lobelia beds were all correctly ticketed and as carefully tended as any in Great Britain. Had it not been for the musical sounds that came floating from the open windows, the red-brick house visible between the lilac bushes might easily have been mistaken for a well-to-do country house. But the musical sounds spoke too eloquently. No doubt the piano is played in most country houses, but no country house, however well-to-do, ever possesses three of these musical instruments—all in full cry—not to speak of the violin which from somewhere in the neighbourhood of the roof was sending its long-drawn wails into the garden below. Of the pianos, one was being clumsily belaboured with Chopin's exercises; another—so far as it was possible to distinguish the fragments—was thundering out Beethoven's 'Funeral March'; while on the third a rattling waltz tune was being brilliantly executed.

Presently, with an effective crash, the waltz came to an end, and a few minutes later a tall and very slender girl appeared upon the garden path which led to the rustic bench. Her light golden hair gleamed where the sunlight caught it, and the pink colour glowed delicately in her cheeks. She passed her handkerchief more than once across her forehead as she came leisurely along between the boxwood borders. At sight of the occupant of the bench she quickened her pace.

'Much too warm weather for playing waltzes,' she remarked, as she sank down beside Annie Brand.

'That was your last lesson, Ellen, was it not?' inquired her companion.

'My last lesson, thank Heaven!'

'Why do you say, thank Heaven? Have you not been happy here?'

'Happy enough, seeing that I have always had enough to eat and to drink. I am even rather sorry to leave, because, you see, I am not quite sure what I shall have to eat and to drink at home.'

Uncle offered to pay for my education, but he hasn't offered to do more.'

'And is that all that makes you sorry? Are you not at all sorry to say good-bye to anybody, not even to Miss Bellew?'

'Oh, bother!' laughed the other, 'I'm not in a confessional. My dearest Annie, be merciful and spare me. It's too hot for your thorough way of doing things. I haven't searched the folds of my heart yet, but I fancy I shall be able to survive the farewells.'

Annie said nothing more, but from the troubled gaze with which her solemn brown eyes rested upon the lobelias it was evident that she did not feel satisfied.

As she sat thus quite still, with the sunset light upon her uncovered brown hair, she was even more beautiful than she had appeared to the Principessa on the photograph, for both the transparently clear complexion and the moist red lips could only be judged of in the reality. There is something delightfully simple about this particular style of beauty; an artist could render its outline in a few strokes, just as no more than a few words are wanted to describe it. Beauty of this sort shows all its strength at once. It is almost as though it despised those small subterfuges, those clever tricks of toilet and manner, by means of which a lesser style of beauty seeks to enlarge its capital. It has got no reserve forces kept back to make attacks at unexpected moments; none of those surprises in store with which a more indefinite style deals; but neither does it require them. What it loses in piquancy it gains in delicious repose.

A long silence had followed upon Ellen's last remark. Up there a rather lame mazurka had succeeded the brilliant waltz, for among these three pianos not one was ever silent for more than five minutes at a time. The executor of the funeral march had reached the end, and had without hesitation begun again from the beginning. Chopin's ill-treated finger exercises ran on in a sort of under-current to the other tunes, something like the chatter of a brooklet, but of one which has got an abnormal number of jumps to make and of boulders to clear. Only the violin had mercifully screamed itself into silence. Annie was puzzling out in her own mind the question of her schoolfellow's feelings. When at last she turned her head she discovered that Ellen's pale blue eyes were fixed upon her face very intently, and with an expression which was not entirely of goodwill.

'What are you thinking of?' asked Annie, reddening under the scrutiny.

'I was wondering which of us two will be married first.'

'Why, you, of course, since you are going home a year sooner.'

'That doesn't follow. What an innocent you are! You've got two cards to play, and I have only got one, therefore your chances are double. Besides, you're only a year younger than I am.'

'What do you mean by "cards to play"? I don't understand.'

'Your money and your face—surely it's clear enough. I have only got my face, which means that I must be all the more careful in playing out my card.'

In Miss Bellew's establishment Annie was known and frequently mocked at for her habit of thinking before she spoke. This time, however, she took no time for reflection, but turned straight upon Ellen with her great brown eyes full of anger.

'I do not look at those as cards to play,' she retorted, in a voice which indignation had made unsteady.

'If you don't then your parents will,' replied Ellen, not in the least disconcerted. 'Be sure of that. Your father is a business man, is he not? No reason for looking so horrified. If you had been plain and rich the look-out would not have been so good, but with those eyes of yours there's no reason why you shouldn't get hold of your husband's heart as well as his hand; or at the very least,' she added, with a fragment of a laugh, 'he will have a plausible excuse for making you believe so.'

Annie was silent for a minute. Then she shook her head.

'I do not believe my father could do that. It would be like treating me like a bale of goods.'

'Your father would need to be a great fool if he did not know how to draw profit from such a piece of goods as your face,' said Ellen, with brutal frankness.

The tone of the words was laden with spite even more than the words themselves.

For three years past Ellen had secretly hated Annie, and for the simple reason that if Annie had not been here she, Ellen Wood, would undoubtedly have been the beauty of the school. After these three years of enforced silence it was an unspeakable relief to her to be able to-day, on the eve of her return home, to taunt her rival to her face. Ellen was vain, but she was clear-sighted; she knew perfectly well that in spite of her brilliant hair and her light blue eyes, in spite of her pink-and-white skin, Annie eclipsed her at every point in the opinion of the majority. Annie herself was not nearly so certain of this, although she could not help knowing that her face was worth looking at. No moderately

intelligent young woman could manage to spend three years in a finishing-school without learning to gauge with tolerable correctness her own share of good looks. The whole attitude of her surroundings, the undisguised jealousy in the eyes of her plain schoolfellows, and the grudging admiration on the faces of the pretty ones, told her far more than her looking-glass did. Besides, it would have been impossible to overlook the fact that whenever a brother or a father came to view the establishment, he was far more apt to turn his head in her direction than in the direction of Marian Burke, for instance, whose complexion was like that of an underdone pudding, and whose half-invisible eyes might have been two stray currants struggling through the dough. Perhaps even this circumstance might have escaped her attention had it not been for the hurry with which her companions were apt on such occasions to push her into the background.

Her natural shrewdness told her that all this could only mean that her looks were above the average; but as yet she had been too conscientiously engaged with her studies to give full attention to the subject, or to have weighed and measured the part which beauty plays in this world. Ellen's remarks opened a subject as yet quite strange to her.

'I would never let myself be treated in such a fashion,' she now remarked, with something of Thomas Brand's doggedness upon her features. 'Nothing can make me into a piece of goods.'

Ellen laughed a little shrilly.

'Of course you begin by saying so. But wait a little. Don't imagine that you'll be allowed to marry whom you will. As far as that goes I'm better off than you; I shall be free to choose for myself, seeing that I can easily manage mother. But you're much too precious, of course, to be left to your own guidance.'

'No, I don't believe it, I don't believe it,' said Annie again. 'Father could never act in that way.'

She said the words firmly, and with an uncalled-for emphasis, almost as though she wished entirely to convince herself by their sound. By nature she was completely unsuspecting, and she blamed herself now severely for the faint doubt which the worldly-wise Ellen's words had stirred within her.

'And besides,' she added, after another moment of thought, 'money alone doesn't make one precious; at least it oughtn't to.'

'Of course not, but it does. Have you ever asked yourself why ten of the girls are ready to fetch your thimble or your book for you while I have got to do my messages for myself? Because

of your *beaux yeux*? Not a bit of it. It's because your pocket-money is larger than theirs. Why do the servants never grumble at having to clean your boots? Why, only because they can see at a glance that your boots have cost double the price of mine. Even Miss Bellew can't help relaxing towards you. You can't really seriously suppose that you would have got the first prize for drawing the other day if you hadn't been your father's daughter. Surely you must know that those chalk heads of yours are bristling with inaccuracies, and that both Clara Pelham and Julia Sanding have got ever so much more talent than you have.'

Annie began to look troubled. 'How do you mean that? Do you really think that Clara and Julia's heads were better than mine?'

'It's not I alone who thinks so. Ask any half-dozen of the other girls you like.'

'Then why did Miss Bellew give me the prize?'

'Bless your heart, I've told you; because you're the daughter of a millionaire.'

'If that is true,' said Annie, slowly, and looking a little pale in the evening light, 'then I shall give the prize back to Miss Bellew. I don't want anything that I haven't deserved. I should feel as if I had stolen it from Clara and Julia.'

'You surely won't be such a fool as that. You're one of the fortunates of the earth, that's all, so why not enjoy your luck as it comes? Do you think it will be any different in the world outside? I don't. I think on the contrary that you will find plenty of people waiting there all ready to share your millions with you. In one way it's very good to be rich, but being poor has its advantages too. If I have got a suitor I shall at least know that he wants myself, and not my fortune.'

Annie was now gazing wonderingly at her companion. She heard the words without having quite realised their meaning.

'Don't tell me more,' she said, upon some impulse which she would not have known how to define. She felt half inclined to lay her hands over her ears, as though to shut out all further disclosures. 'I would rather find out for myself what the world outside is really like. I can't believe that it is so bad.'

'Find out for yourself, by all means,' grumbled Ellen, and then fell to mentally comparing her washed-out print dress and Annie's delicate Indian silk. How that slaty blue would have suited her own colour of hair! Was it a wonder if she hated Annie? At that moment she could not have said whether she

was most jealous of the other's beauty or of her money. Annie herself seemed to divine her schoolfellow's thoughts. At the mention of the boots she had half-guiltily withdrawn her exquisite little patent-leather shoes under the hem of her dress, but the dress itself, with its perfect fit and its soft draperies, was not to be disguised by any change of attitude. There was nothing for it but to bear the weight of her companion's envious gaze. For several minutes they sat silent side by side; Ellen staring at Annie's dress, and Annie at the lobelias, while the scent of the mignonette made the air sweet almost to oppressiveness, and the lame mazurka continued to hop along side by side with the rolling chords of Beethoven's 'Funeral March.'

'I suppose you will spend your holidays here,' remarked Ellen presently.

'I suppose so, since my parents are abroad and their plans unsettled.'

'Well, for my part, I trust I sha'n't have to stop at home for an unreasonable time. Of course I'm very fond of mother, but, between ourselves, I don't know whether I shall be able to stand her accent for long. And then, the way she has of tying her bonnet-strings—it makes me blush for her in public. That's the worst of being well-educated oneself—one can't help comparing oneself with one's parents.'

Annie moved a little uneasily on the bench. For years past this had been a sore subject with her, and one which had cost her many mental struggles. She hoped Ellen would ask no questions, but Ellen's eyes were too sharp.

'You almost look as though you knew what I meant. Now, tell the truth—we're all alone you know—have you never felt a little hot when you were out walking with your pa?'

At that moment Annie would have given a great deal to tell a lie, but it was a vain wish; she had never been able to manage the most innocent fib.

'I try not to,' was all that her conscience would allow her to say, and she said it with scarlet cheeks and averted eyes.

'It is to my parents' money that I owe my education,' she added, forcing herself now to look Ellen straight in the face. 'Therefore it would be mean of me to feel ashamed of the way in which that money was acquired. That's how I look at the matter.'

'No doubt a most praiseworthy manner of looking at it,' said Ellen with a vicious laugh, 'and exactly what was to be expected from the model of the school.'

'I have never set up for a model, Ellen.'

'No, Miss Bellew saves you that trouble. To tell you the honest truth, my dear, I'm just a little sick of having your virtues pointed out to me, and of being told how sober and sensible and wise you are in comparison to us poor sinners.'

This time Annie made no answer at all; indeed, she had none to make. This was a matter which required thinking out. Was she really so sober and so sensible as Miss Bellew declared? Lately, only quite lately, she had begun to doubt whether it was so. As she looked around her now in the soft summer twilight, drinking in the scent of the mignonette and unconsciously gathering up the fragments of the musical *pot-pourri* up there, her eyes began to shine and her young bosom to rise and fall with unspoken wishes for shapeless things which no words could have helped her to define. Sober and sensible? Her rebelliously beating heart seemed to give the words the lie. It was only that her budding youth was bursting into flower, her warm blood crying out to have its part in life; but Annie, to whom all these questions were dark, was entirely at a loss how to explain to herself the fact that such things as the reflection of the moonlight on the pond, or the trills of the nightingale among the lilac-bushes, should affect her so much more deeply than they had done only a year ago. No one had guessed at the transformation, for the more distinctly did she feel this strange new sentimentality growing within her the more careful was she to preserve her outward calmness. Even had she been able to explain what she felt it would have appeared to her as a sort of indecency to confide in even one single friend.

All at once her reflections were broken in upon by Ellen's voice.

'There is Lizzie coming along. She's looking for someone; perhaps it's one of us.'

A white apron and cap were to be seen darting in and out between the lilac-bushes.

'She's in a monstrous hurry. Lizzie!' cried Ellen, in her thin, high voice. 'Who do you want?'

The white-aproned servant-girl turned at the sound, and immediately set off running towards the bench.

'If you please, Miss Brand,' she panted, between hurried breaths, 'Miss Bellew wishes to speak to you immediately in the study.'

Annie rose quickly, in some surprise. She did not know of any reason why Miss Bellew should wish to speak to her at this hour,

neither did she understand why Lizzie should have had to run so fast, and yet the sense of hurry infected her without her being aware of it. She asked no question, but she too set off running a little in front of Lizzie, while Ellen Wood, devoured by curiosity, followed at a distance.

Miss Bellew, plump, short, brisk and business-like, was sitting before a huge writing-table littered with papers. In the passage a washerwoman and a carpenter were waiting for an audience, and in the doorway Annie had run against Julia Sanding coming out with her handkerchief in her hand and scarlet eyelids. It was within the four walls of the study that Miss Bellew dispensed both praise and blame, gave her orders, and paid her bills.

'Oh! Miss Brand. Yes, immediately. Here is the telegram—no, that is Doctor White's last recipe for sunburn, and this here is the wine-merchant's bill. Where have I put it?' and Miss Bellew began groping about among the scattered sheets.

'Here it is. My dear Miss Brand, I am afraid we are going to lose you. Here is your father's message. Do not be alarmed, but I very much fear that your mother must be worse.'

The colour left Annie's face as she took the crumpled paper from the head mistress's hand. With quickened breath she read the message from Lancegno:

'Send Annie immediately with a maid. No time to be lost.

'THOMAS BRAND.'

CHAPTER VII.

THE STIRRUP-CUP.

'Is it quite certain that our Principe has got his eight weeks in his pocket?' inquired Lieutenant Müller of his neighbour at the supper-table.

'Yes, it is quite certain,' replied the adjutant. 'I myself put the sand upon the colonel's signature this morning.'

'Lucky man! The eight hottest weeks in the fifty-two! And what excuse has he made?'

'Something about an inheritance. His mother requires him for the business part of the matter.'

'An inheritance? Surely we are not going to lose him?'

The adjutant discreetly shrugged his shoulders in order to avoid confessing that he knew nothing more.

Ever since the 162nd Regiment had marched into Bleistadt, rather more than five years ago, the unmarried officers had taken their meals in the long, narrow room in which they were now assembled. The whitewashed walls had long since grown grey with tobacco-smoke; the deal floor, in spite of having been scrubbed exactly as many times as a general had come to inspect the regiment, showed several ineradicable wine-stains; and a round black smudge in the centre of the ceiling betrayed pretty plainly that the petroleum lamp which hung there in a wire holder generally smoked. The tablecloth was up to a certain degree protected from stains by the circular pieces of thick grey felt, upon which the beer glasses stood. Everything bore upon it the indubitable stamp of a second-rate inn in a third-rate country town. To-day the tablecloth was strewn with dead and dying midges, who had singed their wings at the lamp, for the windows stood open on to the chief square; but except for an occasional individual who passed along the pavement whistling, or for the stray bark of a dog, Bleistadt seemed to have gone to bed at 9 P.M. Even the company at the supper-table did not look entirely wide awake.

Five years of Bleistadt, however restful to the nerves, could not fail to have a sobering effect even upon the liveliest moods. As the chunks of roast veal disappeared each plate in turn found its way on to the floor, to be licked spotlessly clean by one of the hungry dogs that stood round the table in an expectant circle. The absence of other amusements at Bleistadt had greatly encouraged the keeping of these four-footed companions, and the ample leisure which had been spent upon their education had in some cases led to a quite extraordinary point of perfection. Some of the lieutenants were never to be seen in their private hours accompanied by less than four dogs, of which, as a rule, each belonged to a different race, and there were animals in the regiment calculated to make the fortune of a circus clown—such, for instance, as the major's poodle, who could beat a drum with the best of drummer-boys, or Lieutenant Roccatelli's small yellow terrier, who smoked cigarette after cigarette with inimitable *nonchalance*.

Roccatelli himself had been one of the late-comers to-night. In spite of the colonel's signature in his pocket he did not look much elated at the prospect of the eight weeks of freedom before him. His tall, lithe figure was scarcely yet filled out. The dark, clean-shaven face, with the sleek, black hair, and the some-

what languid black eyes, belonged to a style of looks which in repose might almost be called womanish—it is a style often to be observed in Italians under twenty-five—though the most passing moment of passion was enough to show the mistake. And these moments were more frequent than was desirable. Ever since his earliest childhood Luigi's almost uncontrollable temper had been his mother's chief anxiety; to teach him self-restraint her chief care. Her personal influence had scarcely ever failed of its effect. Often and often when passion was on the point of mastering him had she opened her lips for the one word, 'Luigi!' and the mere tone of that word had been enough to bring him to his senses. Like a child he would throw himself at her feet and cover her hands with penitent kisses. He himself was entirely aware of his failing, and fought against it with all his strength, but the odds were against him. The blood of a hundred ancestors who had been born to rule, and who had been used to settle their quarrels with their daggers in their hands, was in his veins, and could find no outlet in the narrow and restricted circumstances in which he had hitherto lived. He was resolved to bear his fate, and for months at a time he had borne it patiently, until there came a moment when something, anything, often an irrelevant trifle, would give his overstrained nerves the excuse they wanted for snapping, and then anger would seize him like a sort of madness. It seemed almost as though in those brief fits he felt a certain relief in letting loose all the rage which his false position had accumulated within him.

For his position was false, however savagely he might deny it to himself. Had he worn the gay cavalry uniform, as had been his wish, instead of the sober blue dress of the Austrian infantry, his position would have been false yet, for in Austria the cavalry service is *par excellence* the service not only of the high-born, but also of the wealthy. His mother's eye had foreseen the humiliations which would be unavoidable. In an infantry regiment—she had argued to herself—his title would at least create a position for him. And so it did. In spite of his scanty pocket-money Luigi was a hero among his comrades. The regiment did not acknowledge openly that it felt honoured by having a Principe in its ranks, but tacitly everyone was agreed upon this point. The sons of small officials or of unknown country lawyers could not for the life of them help enjoying saying 'Du' to the Prince Roccattelli, and being called 'Du' by him in return.

Luigi writhed a good deal under it all. He suffered from an

undefined desire of improving humanity, a malady very common to high-minded youth whose work in the world is not distinctly cut out for it. At present he could see salvation only in an ideal community where no one would be hampered by full-sounding titles which they were unable to support. But for this evidently the world was not ripe, and meanwhile, in spite of everything he could do, he remained 'our Principe' in the regiment—more in sport than in earnest, but nevertheless 'our Principe.'

'So it's a fact, Roccatelli, that you're about to shirk the manœuvres?' began Lieutenant Müller across the table.

Müller prided himself on being the best-informed officer in the regiment, but the result simply was that his comrades called him inquisitive.

Luigi, who had been eating his supper in complete silence, raised his head abruptly.

'No, that's not a fact. I am going home because my mother needs me on a matter of business. I don't want to shirk anything. I would rather she had required me after the manœuvres, but since she wants me now, I go.'

'Oh, come, Roccatelli,' put in a fat young officer, whose father was a wealthy brewer, and who but for the circumference of his waist would most certainly have been in the cavalry, 'you're not going to tell us seriously, are you, that you're sorry to miss all the heat and the dust that we'll have to swallow—and that makes one so awfully thirsty?' he added, as with a deep sigh he reached for his beer glass.

'I do mean to say it; believe it or not, as you like. I don't like dust and heat, but I can bear them as well as any man. I want to work in the world as a man works, not to be coddled like an infant. Surely that is clear enough?' and he looked round the table, as though calling on anyone to doubt his words.

'Quite clear,' said Lieutenant Müller a little hastily, for he was of a peaceable disposition.

The others watched their cigar-smoke and said nothing at all. They knew that Roccatelli was something of an idealist, and they had grown used to looking at his views of life leniently.

'Pepi!' added Müller quickly, as Luigi pushed back his plate and pulled out his cigarette case. 'There are no matches at this end. Bring some matches to the Prince immediately.'

But the unlucky youth was only making matters worse.

'I have told you a hundred times, Müller, that I am a *lieutenant*,' said Luigi, bending a little across the table, and speaking

not loudly, but with a very ominous emphasis upon each word. 'A *lieutenant*, do you understand? The same as you are. I hate having my title jingled in my ears.'

In spite of his hot temper, Luigi had never been counted among the quarrelsome members of the regiment. Rather, he seemed almost anxious to avoid the smallest chance of a provocation, for he knew very well that he could not afford to indulge even in a harmless dispute. To-day, however, it was clear that the Principe was in a particularly irritable frame of mind. And on the eve of his return home—was it not strange? The truth, which no one but himself knew, was that he was dissatisfied with himself, and therefore necessarily dissatisfied with others. To go home to the Monastero and to 'la mamma,' yes, it would have been delightful, were it not for the confession that weighed upon his mind, and which would now have to be made verbally. Everything reminded him of this approaching moment. Gyps, the small yellow terrier who was so clever at smoking cigarettes, was to-day impatiently pushed aside when he humbly asked for scraps; for even those cigarettes, though not very expensive, had, in his position, been an extravagance, as he now very well saw, and had helped to bring matters to the present pass. A hundred and fifty florins—it was not an appalling sum, in truth, but where was 'la mamma' to take them from? She could not save it from her food, that much was certain; she did what was almost impossible in that way already. And at the mere thought the emotional Italian felt the tears standing in his eyes.

The grey-haired major had retired some time ago—fortunately the man required nine hours' sleep—and both attitudes and conversation had become considerably easier. Chairs had been tilted back against the wall, and a good many elbows were to be seen upon the table. The dogs had been put through all their tricks, and were now enjoying their rewards under the table, and trying to steal those of their neighbours, as could be guessed at from the frequent muffled growls that issued from the lower regions.

'What was wrong with Bernegg this morning?' asked one of the captains of the table at large. It was the brewer's son who replied in his comfortable sleepy voice.

'One of his fits of breathlessness came on again, poor fellow. I always tell him that he doesn't drink enough beer.'

'Are you sure it wasn't one of his *rendez-vous*?' asked the captain, cuttingly. 'When I saw him leaving the parade-ground

so abruptly, a natural train of thought led me to remember that blue-eyed minx at the grocer's.'

But Lieutenant Böttel, staunchly defending his comrade, was quite certain that it had been a genuine fit of breathlessness, brought about by a too restricted consumption of beer. For his part he didn't believe that Bernegg was '*in einer guten Haut*' (in a good skin).

'And does Doktor Vogt's diagnosis tally with yours?' inquired the sceptical captain.

'Of course it does. At least he says that Bernegg has got too little blood, and beer makes blood, as everybody knows.'

Lieutenant Müller, while listening with one ear to the dialogue beside him, could not yet succeed in detaching his attention from his comrade opposite. The snub he had received silenced him only for a few minutes, for curiosity was with him a sort of moral itch which had to be satisfied at any price.

'But the matter of business on which you are going home is not an unpleasant one, I believe,' he began firmly, even though quailing a little under Luigi's gaze. 'If I have heard aright, we ought to be congratulating you now.'

'Upon what?' asked Luigi, curtly.

'Why, upon this new inheritance.' At the word inheritance several of the chairs that had been tilted back against the wall recovered their proper position with a jerk, and the attention of the supper-table concentrated itself abruptly upon the upper end. Lieutenant Müller was not the only one who instantly foresaw that if the Principe was going to become a rich man he would cease to belong to them, and this meant a certain loss of *prestige* to the 162nd.

'Who told you that I had come into an inheritance?'

'Nobody *told* me exactly,' replied Müller, on whose toes the adjutant was treading significantly under the table, 'but there is a report about to that effect, that's all. Of course it may be quite false for anything I know.'

'No, it is perfectly correct,' said Luigi, deliberately. 'We have come into an inheritance.'

Several cigars went out during the short pause that followed.

'An uncle of my mother's has left her two packing-cases full of pictures, and she doesn't want to sell them before I have seen them. It's because of these pictures that I am going to Lancegno. And now you can congratulate me if you like.'

'What's this about Lancegno?' asked a new voice, as the

latest of all late-comers entered, accompanied by a small pack of ravenous greyhounds, who immediately disappeared under the table, where a free fight began which for several minutes absorbed the attention of the company.

'I am glad to see that you have recovered from your fit of breathlessness,' began the captain, as soon as peace had been restored. Evidently his doubts were not yet quite at rest.

'Thanks. It was only an affair of five minutes. Between you and me, I believe I'm in perfect working order; but since it comes in so opportunely, I don't see why it shouldn't help me to pass the next two months in a more lively neighbourhood than this. I have asked Doktor Vogt whether he doesn't think that a change of air would do me a lot of good, and he seems to incline to the idea.'

Bernegg was one of those excessively fair-haired men who always look ten years younger than they are, and who finally manage to turn grey without exciting any special attention, even among their nearest friends. He was now close upon thirty; but in spite of being the oldest lieutenant in the regiment, he not only still bore the nickname of 'the Irresistible,' which he had acquired in earlier days, but also entirely lived up to it. It was said of him that in every station in which he had hitherto been quartered he had gained every female heart under thirty-five. Why it should be so was not easy to explain, for his features were nothing in particular and his height somewhat below the average. It was one of those mysteries of female preference which we so often run against in society. How he had managed to gather these laurels without ever coming into the slightest collision with *les convenances*, without so much as fighting a single duel or having his ears boxed by a single indignant papa, was a still greater mystery to his comrades, though entirely characteristic of the man. How was it, for instance, that poor Lieutenant Böttel, who had tried to steal the most innocent kiss from the baker's niece, received a severe reprimand from higher quarters, while Bernegg, whose *rendez-vous* were notorious in the regiment, was left in peace by everybody?

'It all depends upon keeping one's head,' he would explain to the younger men. 'When you lose your head you betray yourself, and it comes to an *esclandre*, and an *esclandre*, besides being in terribly bad style, is also unpleasant when one is not of a bloodthirsty disposition. I confess that I have got no hankering after playing the hero in times of peace.'

'But how does one keep one's head?'

And then Bernegg would shrug his shoulders and contemplate his comrades pityingly from out of his self-possessed grey eyes. His eyes always remained self-possessed in spite of the liveliness of his manner and the fluency of his speech. His most fiery declaration of love had never succeeded in carrying himself away. This was the whole secret of his art. To the eye he appeared to be a sort of human butterfly that fluttered gaily from flower to flower, and so, in fact, he was; but a butterfly that calculates its distances to a nicety and has eyes in the back of his head as well as in the front, prudently and yet fully enjoying every drop of honey that each chalice contains, while the other butterflies that would have followed blindly after him either broke their wings against each other, or else were caught in a net and put in a collection.

With all this 'the Irresistible One' was far from being a heartless monster. It was only that he was too irresistible even for himself. To be so abnormally 'lucky with women,' and to abjure the triumphs that pursued him, would have been beyond his strength. He meant no harm, but he simply flirted as a pretty woman flirts, because 'she can't help it,' or because it would be too much trouble not to flirt. He did not even boast of his victories, and if he was vain of anything, it was of his French accent.

'*A propos* Roccattelli,' he now began, 'what was that you were saying about Lancegno? It's from there you hail, is it not? Doktor Vogt was talking about Lancegno this very morning—that is to say, it's one of the places which he suggested to me, or, more strictly speaking, I to him. But I should like a little more information first. Is it a place that people go to only to be cured, or also to have some fun? Have any of the patients—the female patients, I mean—got healthy complexions and enough 'go' left in them to kill time pleasantly? There's nothing really wrong with me, you know, except that it seems I've been scrimped with the iron in my blood, and I don't enjoy the idea of waltzing with a lot of spectres. By the bye, they do play waltz music there occasionally, I hope? Is there a decent room to dance in?'

Luigi replied, somewhat ungraciously, that there were dances at least twice a week in the *Cursalon*, and that none of the ladies he had seen there had reminded him of spectres.

'And the inhabitants? They are your own countrymen, are they not? Olive-tinted skins and red lips, and all the rest of it

—h'm, h'm—I rather like the sound of Lancegno. Roccатели, my prophetic soul tells me that our parting is not for long. Let us empty a glass to a joyful meeting in the *Cursalon*! Ha, captain, surely you don't mean to say that you're going to bed already? Why, I've only just come. And to-day, of all days, when we ought to be giving our Principe his stirrup-cup!

The town-bred Bernegg was the only one of the regiment who had never got broken into Bleistadt hours, and who struggled chronically though uselessly against them.

The captain sat down again with a shrug of his shoulders. For the sake of a glass of *Voslauer* he had no objection to sacrificing an hour's sleep. Luigi had slipped his hand into his pocket, and under cover of the table was hastily counting the contents. His comrades had purposely begun to talk among themselves, but though nothing distinct had been said, he knew perfectly well what was expected of him. It had ever been the regimental custom on the eve of a departure; and how many glasses had he not himself emptied at the expense of leave-taking comrades? It was of these glasses that he was thinking as, with a dark flush on his face, he counted and re-counted. The money for his railway ticket was there, but nothing beyond; the thing was impossible. It was the moment of keenest humiliation which his proud spirit had ever yet experienced. He raised his eyes and met those of Lieutenant Böttel fixed upon him with sympathising attention. The lieutenant leant across the table and said something in a robust whisper by no means inaudible to the neighbours on either side. Böttel, who was the one Cræsus of the regiment, had for three years past been trying to lend money to Roccатели, sums which he would most certainly never have asked for back again, so thankful was he to the Principe for being a comrade of his own. His intentions were excellent, but the move he had made was the very thing still a-wanting to fill the cup of Luigi's trials to the brim. He pushed back his chair and stood up so suddenly that all eyes were turned in surprise towards him. The dark flush on his face had faded as quickly as it had come, leaving him paler than usual, and one of the muscles of his right cheek was twitching just perceptibly.

'No,' he said hoarsely, with his flaming eyes on Böttel's face, 'I don't want your money. There are a dozen old Jews in the town ready to lend me money if I so choose. I have told you a hundred times that I won't take a comrade's money. Why, I don't even need the money-lenders. Pepi will bring me fifty

bottles of wine if I tell him to. Why do I not tell him? Because I have sworn to take nothing more on credit. I won't be insulted by your offers.'

He spoke very hurriedly, with short pauses after every few words, as though he were labouring for breath, and his fingers opened and closed rapidly with a convulsive movement that was quite unconscious.

'But I wasn't dreaming of an insult,' stammered Lieutenant Böttel, who was looking half inclined to cry. The remark about the 'old Jews' had gone deep home, for it was an open secret that the Böttels had only been baptised in the present generation; but the idea of quarrelling with Roccatelli on that account could not be contemplated for a moment. It was well known in the regiment that Luigi's ideas about duelling were as impracticable as all his other opinions, and that a *rencontre* with him would be no mere dallying with fencing weapons, but more likely a matter of life and death.

'I had no idea of saying anything unpleasant; I only meant that——'

'For goodness sake, stop him, we're going to have an *esclandre*!' murmured Bernegg, with such an inimitable expression of offended propriety that for the majority of the company the tension of the situation was instantly relaxed.

Luigi had heard nothing, but still stood and looked at his comrade as though with his eyes he would nail the other to his seat. For a moment it seemed as though this innocent victim were to bear the whole weight of the pent-up bitterness within him. Then suddenly the fire went out in his eyes. He looked past Böttel and out at the open window where the outlines of the sleeping houses opposite were visible through the summer night. But he did not see them; it was the figure of 'la mamma' that had risen before his mind's eye. Her voice could not reach him here, but it was not hard to recall the sound of that warning 'Luigi!' which had so often pulled him back from the verge of danger.

For a few seconds he stood and struggled for self-control. No one knew what had come over him when, without a word of explanation, he snatched his cap from the wall behind him and abruptly left the room.

(To be continued.)

*English Seamen in the Sixteenth Century.*¹

LECTURE V.

PARTIES IN THE STATE.

ON December 21, 1585, a remarkable scene took place in the English House of Commons. The Prince of Orange, after many attempts had failed, had been successfully disposed of in the Low Countries. A fresh conspiracy had just been discovered for a Catholic insurrection in England, supported by a foreign invasion; the object of which was to dethrone Elizabeth and to give her crown to Mary Stuart. The Duke of Alva, at the time of the Ridolfi plot, had pointed out as a desirable preliminary, if the invasion was to succeed, the assassination of the Queen of England. The succession being undecided, he had calculated that the confusion would paralyse resistance, and the notorious favour with which Mary Stuart's pretensions were regarded by a powerful English party would ensure her an easy victory were Elizabeth once removed. But this was an indispensable condition. It had become clear at last that so long as Elizabeth was alive Philip would not willingly sanction the landing of a Spanish army on English shores. Thus, among the more ardent Catholics, especially the refugees at the Seminary at Rheims, a crown in heaven was held out to any spiritual knight errant who would remove the obstacle. The enterprise itself was not a difficult one. Elizabeth was aware of her danger, but she was personally fearless. She refused to distrust the Catholics. Her household was full of them. She admitted anyone to her presence who desired a private interview. Dr. Parry, a member of Parliament, primed by encouragements from the Cardinal of Como and the Vatican, had undertaken to risk his life to win the

¹ Lectures delivered at Oxford in Easter Term, 1894, in continuation of those given last year. The four preceding Lectures on 'English Seamen in the Sixteenth Century' appeared in the numbers of this magazine for July, August, September, and October, 1893.

glorious prize. He introduced himself into the palace, properly provided with arms. He professed to have information of importance to give. The Queen received him repeatedly. Once he was alone with her in the palace garden, and was on the point of killing her, when he was awed, as he said, by the likeness to her father. Parry was discovered and hanged, but Elizabeth refused to take warning. When there were so many aspirants for the honour of removing Jezebel, and Jezebel was so easy of approach, it was felt that one would at last succeed; and the loyal part of the nation, led by Lord Burghley, formed themselves into an association to protect a life so vital to them and apparently so indifferent to herself.

The subscribers bound themselves to pursue to the death all manner of persons who should attempt or consent to anything to the harm of her Majesty's person; never to allow or submit to any pretended successor by whom or for whom such detestable act should be attempted or committed; but to pursue such persons to death and act the utmost revenge upon them.

The bond in its first form was a visible creation of despair. It implied a condition of things in which order would have ceased to exist. The lawyers, perhaps, who, it is curious to observe, were generally in Mary Stuart's interest, vehemently objected; yet so passionate was public feeling that it was signed throughout the Kingdom, and Parliament was called to pass an Act which would secure the same object. Mary Stuart, at any rate, was not to benefit by the crimes either of herself or her admirers. It was provided that if the realm was invaded, or a rebellion instigated by or for any one pretending a title to the crown after the Queen's death, such pretender should be disqualified for ever. In the event of the Queen's assassination the Government was to devolve on a Committee of Peers and Privy Councillors, who were to examine the particulars of the murder and execute the perpetrators and their accomplices; while, with a significant allusion, all Jesuits and seminary priests were required to leave the country instantly, under pain of death.

The House of Commons was heaving with emotion when the Act was sent up to the Peers. To give expression to their burning feelings Sir Christopher Hatton proposed that before they separated they should join him in a prayer for the Queen's preservation. The four hundred members all rose, and knelt on the floor of the House, repeating Hatton's words after him, sentence by sentence.

Jesuits and seminary priests! Attempts have been made to justify the conspiracies against Elizabeth from what is called the persecution of the innocent enthusiasts who came from Rheims to preach the Catholic faith to the English people. Popular writers and speakers dwell on the executions of Campian and his friends as worse than the Smithfield burnings, and amidst general admiration and approval these martyred saints have been lately canonised. Their mission, it is said, was purely religious. Was it so? The chief article in the religion which they came to teach was the duty of obedience to the Pope, who had excommunicated the Queen, had absolved her subjects from their allegiance, and, by a relaxation of the Bull, had permitted them to pretend to loyalty *ad illud tempus*, till a Catholic army of deliverance should arrive. A Pope had sent a legate to Ireland and was at that moment stirring up a bloody insurrection there.

But what these seminary priests were, and what their object was, will best appear from an account of the condition of England, drawn up for the use of the Pope and Philip, by Father Parsons, who was himself at the head of the mission. The date of it is 1585, almost simultaneous with the scene in Parliament which I have just been describing. The English refugees, from Cardinal Pole downwards, were the most active and passionate preachers of a Catholic crusade against England. They failed, but they have revenged themselves in history. Pole, Sanders, Allen, and Parsons have coloured all that we suppose ourselves to know of Henry VIII. and Elizabeth. What I am about to read to you does not differ essentially from what we have already heard from these persons; but it is new, and being intended for practical guidance, is complete in its way. It comes from the Spanish archives, and is not, therefore, open to suspicion. Parsons, as you know, was a Fellow of Balliol before his conversion; Allen was a Fellow of Oriel, and Sanders of New College. An Oxford Church of England education is an excellent thing, and beautiful characters have been formed in the Catholic Universities abroad; but as the elements of dynamite are innocent in themselves, yet when fused together produce effects no one would have dreamt of, so Oxford and Rome, when they have run together, have always generated a somewhat furious compound.

Parsons describes his statement as a 'brief note on the present condition of England,' from which may be inferred the ease and opportuneness of the holy enterprise. 'England,' he says, 'contains fifty-two counties, of which forty are well inclined to the Catholic

faith. Heretics in these are few, and are hated by all ranks. The remaining twelve are infected more or less, but even in these the Catholics are in the majority. Divide England into three parts; two-thirds at least are Catholic at heart, though many conceal their convictions in fear of the Queen. English Catholics are of two sorts, one which makes an open profession, regardless of consequences, the other believing at the bottom, but unwilling to risk life or fortune, and so submitting outwardly to the heretic laws, but as eager as the Catholic confessors for redemption from slavery.

'The Queen and her party,' he goes on, 'more fear these secret Catholics than those who wear their colours openly. The latter they can fine, disarm, and make innocuous. The others, being outwardly compliant, cannot be touched, nor can any precaution be taken against their rising when the day of divine vengeance shall arrive.

'The counties specially Catholic are the most warlike, and contain harbours and other conveniences for the landing of an invading army. The north towards the Scotch border has been trained in constant fighting. The Scotch nobles on the other side are Catholic and will lend their help. So will all Wales.

'The inhabitants of the midland and southern provinces, where the taint is deepest, are indolent and cowardly, and do not know what war means. The towns are more corrupt than the country districts. But the strength of England does not lie, as on the Continent, in towns and cities. The town population are merchants and craftsmen, rarely or never nobles or magnates.

'The nobility, who have the real power, reside with their retinues in castles scattered over the land. The wealthy yeomen are strong and honest, all attached to the ancient faith, and may be counted on when an attempt is made for the restoration of it. The knights and gentry are generally well affected also, and will be well to the front. Many of their sons are being now educated in our seminaries. Some are in exile, but all, whether at home or abroad, will be active on our side.

'Of the great peers, marquises, earls, viscounts, and barons, part are with us, part against us. But the latter sort are new creations, whom the Queen has promoted either for heresy or as her personal lovers, and therefore universally abhorred.

'The premier peer of the old stock is the Earl of Arundel, son and heir of the late Duke of Norfolk, whom she has imprisoned because he tried to escape out of the realm. This earl is entirely Catholic, as well as his brothers and kinsmen; and they have

powerful vassals who are eager to revenge the injury of their lord. The Earl of Northumberland and his brothers are Catholics. They too have family wrongs to repay, their father having been this year murdered in the Tower, and they have placed themselves at my disposal. The Earl of Worcester and his heir hate heresy, and are devoted to us with all their dependents. The Earls of Cumberland and Southampton and Viscount Montague are faithful, and have a large following. Besides these we have many of the barons—Dacre, Morley, Vaux, Windsor, Wharton, Lovelace, Stourton, and others besides. The Earl of Westmoreland, with Lord Paget and Sir Francis Englefield, who reside abroad, have been incredibly earnest in promoting our enterprise. With such support it is impossible that we can fail. These lords and gentlemen, when they see efficient help coming to them, will certainly rise, and for the following reasons:—

‘1. Because some of the principals among them have given me their promise.

‘2. Because, on hearing that Pope Pius intended to excommunicate and depose the Queen sixteen years ago, many Catholics did rise. They only failed because no support was sent them, and the Pope’s sentence had not at that time been actually published. Now, when the Pope has spoken and help is certain, there is not a doubt how they will act.

‘3. Because the Catholics are now much more numerous, and have received daily instruction in their religion from our priests. There is now no orthodox Catholic in the whole realm who supposes that he is any longer bound in conscience to obey the Queen. Books for the occasion have been written and published by us, in which we prove that it is not only lawful for Catholics, but their positive duty, to fight against the Queen and heresy when the Pope bids them; and these books are so greedily read among them that when the time comes they are certain to take arms.

‘4. The Catholics in these late years have shown their real feeling in the martyrdoms of priests and laymen, and in attempts made by several of them against the person and State of the Queen. Various Catholics have tried to kill her at the risk of their own lives, and are still trying.

‘5. We have three hundred priests dispersed among the houses of the nobles and honest gentry. Every day we add to their number; and these priests will direct the consciences and actions of the Catholics at the great crisis.

'6. They have been so harried and so worried that they hate the heretics worse than they hate the Turks.

'Should any of them fear the introduction of a Spanish army as dangerous to their national liberties, there is an easy way to satisfy their scruples. Let it be openly declared that the enterprise is undertaken in the name of the Pope, and there will be no more hesitation. We have ourselves prepared a book for their instruction, to be issued at the right moment. If his Holiness desires to see it we will have it translated into Latin for his use.

'Before the enterprise is undertaken the sentence of excommunication and deposition ought to be reissued, with special clauses.

'It must be published in all adjoining Catholic countries; all Catholic kings and princes must be admonished to forbid every description of intercourse with the pretended Queen and her heretic subjects, and themselves especially to make or observe no treaties with her, to send no embassies to her and admit none; to render no help to her of any sort or kind.

'Besides those who will be our friends for religion's sake we shall have others with us—neutrals or heretics of milder sort, or atheists, with whom England now abounds, who will join us in the interest of the Queen of Scots. Among them are the Marquis of Winchester, the Earls of Shrewsbury, Derby, Oxford, Rutland, and several other peers. The Queen of Scots herself will be of infinite assistance to us in securing these. She knows who are her secret friends. She has been able so far, and we trust will always be able, to communicate with them. She will see that they are ready at the right time. She has often written to me to say that she hopes that she will be able to escape when the time comes. In her last letter she urges me to be vehement with his Holiness in pushing on the enterprise, and bids him have no concern for her own safety. She believes that she can care for herself. If not, she says she will lose her life willingly in a cause so sacred.

'The enemies that we shall have to deal with are the more determined heretics whom we call Puritans, and certain creatures of the Queen, the Earls of Leicester and Huntingdon, and a few others. They will have an advantage in the money in the Treasury, the public arms and stores, and the army and navy, but none of them have ever seen a camp. The leaders have been nuzzled in love-making and Court pleasures, and they will all fly at the first shock of war. They have not a man who can command in the field. In the whole realm there are but two fortresses

which could stand a three days' siege. The people are enervated by long peace, and except a few who have served with the heretics in Flanders cannot bear their arms. Of those few some are dead and some have deserted to the Prince of Parma, a clear proof of the real disposition to revolt. There is abundance of food and cattle in the country, all of which will be at our service and cannot be kept from us. Everywhere there are safe and roomy harbours, almost all undefended. An invading force can be landed with ease, and there will be no lack of local pilots. Fifteen thousand trained soldiers will be sufficient, aided by the Catholic English, though, of course, the larger the force, particularly if it includes cavalry, the quicker the work will be done and the less the expense. Practically there will be nothing to overcome save an unwarlike and undisciplined mob.

'Sixteen times England has been invaded, Twice only the native race have repelled the attacking force. They have been defeated on every other occasion, and with a cause so holy and just as ours we need not fear to fail. The expenses shall be repaid to his Holiness and the Catholic King out of the property of the heretics and the Protestant clergy. There will be ample in these resources to compensate all who give us their hand. But the work must be done promptly. Delay will be infinitely dangerous. If we put off, as we have done hitherto, the Catholics will be tired out and reduced in numbers and strength. The nobles and priests now in exile, and able to be of such service, will break down in poverty. The Queen of Scots may be executed or die a natural death, or something may happen to the Catholic King or his Holiness. The Queen of England may herself die, a heretic Government may be reconstructed, under a heretic successor, the young Scotch king or some other, and our case will then be desperate; whereas if we can prevent this and save the Queen of Scots there will be good hope of converting her son and reducing the whole island to the obedience of the faith. Now is the moment. The French Government cannot interfere. The Duke of Guise will help us for the sake of the faith and for his kinswoman. The Turks are quiet. The Church was never stronger or more united. Part of Italy is under the Catholic King; the rest is in league with his Holiness. The revolt in the Low Countries is all but crushed. The sea provinces are on the point of surrendering. If they give up the contest their harbours will be at our service for the invasion. If not, the way to conquer them is to conquer England.

'I need not urge how much it imports his Holiness to undertake this glorious work. He, supremely wise as he is, knows that from this Jezebel and her supporters come all the perils which disturb the Christian world. He knows that heretical depravity and all our other miseries can only end when this woman is chastised. Reverence for his Holiness and love for my afflicted country force me to speak. I submit to his most holy judgment myself and my advice.'

The most ardent Catholic apologist will hardly maintain in the face of this document that the English Jesuits and seminary priests were the innocent missionaries of religion which the modern enemies of Elizabeth's Government describe them. Father Parsons, the writer of it, was himself the leader and director of the Jesuit invasion, and cannot be supposed to have misrepresented the purpose for which they had been sent over. The point of special interest is the account which he gives of the state of parties and general feeling in the English people. Was there that wide disposition to welcome an invading army in so large a majority of the nation? The question is supposed to have been triumphantly answered three years later, when it is asserted that the difference of creed was forgotten, and Catholics and Protestants fought side by side for the liberties of England. But in the first place the circumstances were changed. The Queen of Scots no longer lived, and the success of the Armada implied a foreign sovereign. But next the experiment was not tried. The battle was fought at sea by a fleet four-fifths of which were composed of Protestant adventurers, fitted out and manned by those zealous Puritans whose fidelity to the Queen Parsons himself admitted. Lord Howard may have been an Anglo-Catholic; Roman Catholic he never was; but he and his brother were the only loyalists in the house of Howard. Arundel and the rest of his kindred were all that Parsons claimed for them. How the country levies would have behaved had Parma landed is still uncertain. It is likely that if the Spanish army had gained a first success there might have been some who would have behaved as Sir William Stanley did. It is observable that Parsons mentions Leicester and Huntingdon as the only powerful peers on whom the Queen could rely, and Leicester, otherwise the unfittest man in her dominions, she chose to command her land army.

The Duke of Alva and his master, Philip, both of them distrusted political priests. Political priests, they said, did not understand the

facts of things. Theological enthusiasm made them credulous of what they wished. But Father Parsons's estimate is confirmed in all its parts by the letters of Mendoza, the Spanish ambassador in London. Mendoza was himself a soldier, and his first duty was to learn the real truth. It may be taken as certain that, with the Queen of Scots still alive to succeed to the throne, at the time of the scene in the House of Commons with which I began this lecture the great majority of the country party disliked the Reformers, and were looking forward to the accession of a Catholic sovereign, and as a consequence to a religious revolution.

It explains the difficulty of Elizabeth's position and the inconsistency of her political action. Burghley, Walsingham, Mildmay, Knolles, the elder Bacon, were believing Protestants, and would have had her put herself openly at the head of a Protestant European league. They believed that right and justice were on their side, that their side was God's cause, as they called it, and that God would care for it. Elizabeth had no such complete conviction. She disliked dogmatism, Protestant as well as Catholic. She ridiculed Mr. Cecil and his brothers in Christ. She thought, like Erasmus, that the articles of faith, for which men were so eager to kill one another, were subjects which they knew very little about, and that every man might think what he would on such matters without injury to the commonwealth. To become 'head of the name' would involve open war with the Catholic Powers. War meant war taxes, which more than half her subjects would resent and resist. Religion as she understood it was a development of law—the law of moral conduct. You could not have two laws in one country, and you could not have two religions; but the outward form mattered comparatively little. The people she ruled over were divided about these forms. They were mainly fools, and if she let them each have chapels and churches of their own, molehills would become mountains, and the congregations would go from arguing into fighting. With Parliament to help her, therefore, she established a Liturgy, in which those who wished to find the Mass could hear the Mass, while those who wanted predestination and justification by faith could find it in the articles. Both could meet under a common roof, and use a common service, if they would only be reasonable. If they would not be reasonable, the Catholics might have their own ritual in their own houses, and would not be interfered with.

This system continued for the first eleven years of Elizabeth's reign. No Catholic, she could proudly say, had ever during that

time been molested for his belief. There was a small fine for non-attendance at church, but even this was rarely levied, and by the confession of the Jesuits the Queen's policy was succeeding too well. Sensible men began to see that the differences of religion were not things to quarrel over. Faith was growing languid. The elder generation, who had lived through the Edward and Mary revolutions, were satisfied to be left undisturbed; a new generation was growing up, with new ideas; and so the Church of Rome bestirred itself. Elizabeth was excommunicated. The cycle began of intrigue and conspiracy, assassination plots, and Jesuit invasions. Punishments had to follow, and in spite of herself Elizabeth was driven into what the Catholics could call religious persecution. Religious it was not, for the seminary priests were missionaries of treason. But religious it was made to appear. The English gentleman who wished to remain loyal without forfeiting his faith was taught to see that a sovereign under the Papal curse had no longer a claim on his allegiance. If he disobeyed the Pope he had ceased to be a member of the Church of Christ. The Papal party grew in coherence, while, opposed to them as their purpose came in view, the Protestants, who at first had been inclined to Lutheranism, adopted the deeper and sterner creed of Calvin and Geneva. The memories of the Marian cruelties revived again. They saw themselves threatened with a return to stake and fagot. They closed their ranks and resolved to die rather than submit again to Antichrist. They might be inferior in numbers. A plébiscite in England at that moment would have sent Burghley and Walsingham to the scaffold. But the Lord could save by few as well as by many. Judah had but two tribes out of the twelve, but the words of the men of Judah were fiercer than the words of Israel.

One great mistake had been made by Parsons. He could not estimate what he could not understand. He admitted that the inhabitants of the towns were mainly heretic—London, Bristol, Plymouth, and the rest—but he despised them as merchants, craftsmen, mean persons who had no heart to fight in them. Nothing is more remarkable in the history of the sixteenth century than the effect of Calvinism in levelling distinctions of rank and in steeling and ennobling the character of common men. In Scotland, in the Low Countries, in France there was the same phenomenon. In Scotland the Kirk was the creation of the preachers and the people, and peasants and workmen dared to stand in the field against belted knights and barons who had

trampled on their fathers for centuries. The artisans of the Low Countries had for twenty years defied the whole power of Spain. The Huguenots were not a fifth of the French nation, yet defeat could never dishearten them. Again and again they forced crown and nobles to make terms with them. It was the same in England. The allegiance to their feudal leaders dissolved into a higher obligation to the King of kings, whose elect they believed themselves to be. Election to them was not a theological fantasm, but an enlistment in the army of God. A little flock they might be, but they were a dangerous people to deal with, most of all in the towns on the sea. The sea was the element of the Reformers. The Popes had no jurisdiction over the winds and waves. Rochelle was the citadel of the Huguenots. The English merchants and mariners had wrongs of their own perpetually renewed, which fed the bitterness of their indignation. Touch where they would in Spanish ports, the inquisitor's hand was on their ships' crews, and the crews, unless they denied their faith, were handed over to the stake or the galleys. The Calvinists are accused of intolerance. I fancy that even in these humane and enlightened days we should not be very tolerant if the King of Dahomey was to burn every European visitor to his dominions who would not worship Mumbo Jumbo. The Duke of Alva was not very merciful to heretics, but he tried to bridle the zeal of the Holy Office in burning the English seamen. Even Philip himself remonstrated. It was to no purpose. The Holy Office said they would think about it, but concluded to go on. I am not the least surprised if the English seamen were intolerant. I should be very much surprised if they had not been. The Queen could not protect them. They had to protect themselves as they could, and make Spanish vessels, when they could catch them, pay for the iniquities of their rulers.

With such a temper rising on both sides Elizabeth's policy had but a poor chance. She still hoped that the better sense of mankind would keep the doctrinal enthusiasts in order. Elizabeth wished her subjects would be content to live together in unity of spirit, if not in unity of theory, in the bond of peace, not hatred, in righteousness of life, not in orthodoxy preached by stake and gibbet. She was content to wait and to persevere. She refused to declare war. War would tear the world in pieces. She knew her danger. She knew that she was in constant peril of assassination. She knew that if the Protestants were crushed in Scotland, in France, and in the Low Countries her own turn

would follow. To protect insurgents avowedly would be to justify insurrection against herself. But what she would not do openly she would do secretly. What she would not do herself she let her subjects do. Thousands of English volunteers fought in Flanders for the States and in France for the Huguenots. When the English Treasury was shut to the entreaties of Coligny or William of Orange the London citizens untied their purse-strings. Her friends in Scotland fared ill. They were encouraged by promises which were not observed, because to observe them might bring on war. They committed themselves for her sake. They fell one after another—Murray, Morton, Gowrie—into bloody graves. Others took their places and struggled on. The Scotch Reformation was saved. Scotland was not allowed to open its arms to an invading army to strike England across the Border. But this was held to be their sufficient recompense. They cared for their cause as well as for the English Queen, and they had their reward. If they saved her they saved their own country. She too did not lie on a bed of roses. To prevent open war she was exposing her own life to the assassins. At any moment a pistol-shot or a stab with a dagger might add Elizabeth to the list of victims. She knew it, yet she went on upon her own policy, and faced in her person her own share of the risk. One thing only she did. If she would not defend her friends and her subjects as Queen of England, she left them free to defend themselves. She allowed traitors to be hanged when they were caught at their work. She allowed the merchants to fit out their privateer fleets, to defend at their own cost the shores of England, and to teach the Spaniards to fear their vengeance.

But how long was all this to last? How long were loyal citizens to feel that they were living over a loaded mine—throughout their own country, throughout the Continent, at Rome and at Madrid, at Brussels and at Paris, a legion of conspirators were driving their shafts under the English commonwealth. The Queen might be indifferent to her own danger, but on the Queen's life hung the peace of the whole realm. A stroke of a poniard, a touch of a trigger, and swords would be flying from their scabbards in every county; England would become, like France, one wild scene of anarchy and civil war. No successor had been named. The Queen refused to hear a successor declared. Mary Stuart's hand had been in every plot since she crossed the Border. Twice the House of Commons had petitioned for her execution. Elizabeth would neither touch her

life nor allow her hopes of the crown to be taken from her. The Bond of Association was but a remedy of despair, and the Act of Parliament would have passed for little in the tempest which would immediately rise. The agony reached a height when the fatal news came from the Netherlands that there at last assassination had done its work. The Prince of Orange, after many failures, had been finished, and a libel was found in the palace at Westminster exhorting the ladies of the household to provide a Judith among themselves to rid the world of the English Holofernes.

One part of Elizabeth's subjects, at any rate, were not disposed to sit down in patience under the eternal nightmare. From Spain was to come the army of deliverance for which the Jesuits were so passionately longing. To the Spaniards the Pope was looking for the execution of the Bull of Deposition. Father Parsons had left out of his estimate the Protestant adventurers of London and Plymouth, who, besides their creed and their patriotism, had their private wrongs to revenge. Philip might talk of peace, and perhaps in weariness might at times seriously wish for it; but between the Englishmen whose life was on the ocean and the Spanish Inquisition, which had burnt so many of them, there was no peace possible. To them Spain was the natural enemy. Among the daring spirits who had sailed with Drake round the globe, who had waylaid the Spanish gold ships, and startled the world with their exploits, the joy of whose lives had been to fight Spaniards wherever they could meet with them, there was but one wish—for an honest open war. The great galleons were to them no objects of terror. The Spanish naval power seemed to them a 'colossus stuffed with clouts.' They were Protestants all of them, but their theology was rather practical than speculative. If Italians and Spaniards chose to believe in the Mass, it was not any affair of theirs. Their quarrel was with the insolent pretence of Catholics to force their creed on others with sword and cannon. The spirit which was working in them was the genius of freedom. On their own element they felt that they could be the spiritual tyrants' masters. But as things were going rebellion was like to break out at home: their homesteads might be burning, their country overrun with the Prince of Parma's army, the Inquisition at their own doors, and a Catholic sovereign bringing back the fagots of Smithfield.

The Reformation at its origin was no introduction of novel heresies. It was a revolt of the laity of Europe against the profligacy

and avarice of the clergy. The Popes and cardinals pretended to be the representatives of Heaven. When called to account for abuse of their powers, they had behaved precisely as mere corrupt human kings and aristocracies behave. They had intrigued; they had excommunicated; they had set nation against nation, sovereigns against their subjects; they had encouraged assassination; they had made themselves infamous by horrid massacres, and had taught one half of foolish Christendom to hate the other. The hearts of the poor English seamen whose comrades had been burnt at Seville to make a Spanish holiday thrilled with a sacred determination to end such scenes. The purpose that was in them broke into a wild war music, as the wind harp swells and screams under the breath of the storm. I mentioned, I believe, last year an unsigned letter of some inspired old sea-dog, which I found in the Record Office, written in a bold round hand and addressed to Elizabeth. The ships' companies which in summer served in Philip's men-of-war went in winter in thousands to catch cod on the banks of Newfoundland. 'Give me five vessels,' the writer said, 'and I will go out and sink them all, and the galleons shall rot in Cadiz harbour for want of hands to sail them. But decide, madam, and decide quickly. Time flies and will not return. *The wings of man's life are plumed with the feathers of death.*'

The Queen did not decide. The five ships were not sent, and the poor Castilian sailors caught their cod in peace. But in spite of herself Elizabeth was driven forward by the tendencies of things. The death of the Prince of Orange left the States without a Government. The Prince of Parma was pressing them hard. Without a leader they were lost. They offered themselves to Elizabeth, to be incorporated in the English Empire. They said that if she refused they must either submit to Spain or become provinces of France. The Netherlands, whether Spanish or French, would be equally dangerous to England. The Netherlands once brought back under the Pope, England's turn would come next; while to accept the proposal meant instant and desperate war, both with France and Spain too—for France would never allow England again to gain a foot on the Continent. Elizabeth knew not what to do. She would and she would not. She did not accept; she did not refuse. It was neither No nor Yes. Philip, who was as fond of indirect ways as herself, proposed to quicken her irresolution.

The harvest had failed in Galicia, and the population were starving. England grew more corn than she wanted, and, under

a special promise that the crews should not be molested, a fleet of corn-traders had gone with cargoes of grain to Coruña, Bilbao, and Santander. The King of Spain, on hearing that Elizabeth was treating with the States, issued a sudden order to seize the vessels, confiscate the cargoes, and imprison the men. The order was executed. One English ship only was lucky enough to escape by the adroitness of her commander. The *Primrose*, of London, lay in Bilbao roads with a captain and fifteen hands. The mayor, on receiving the order, came on board to look over the ship. He then went on shore for a sufficient force to carry out the seizure. After he was gone the captain heard of the fate which was intended for him. The mayor returned with two boat-loads of soldiers, stepped up the ladder, touched the captain on the shoulder, and told him he was a prisoner. The Englishmen snatched pike and cutlass, pistol and battleaxe, killed seven or eight of the Spanish boarders, threw the rest overboard, and flung stones on them as they scrambled into their boats. The mayor, who had fallen into the sea, caught a rope and was hauled up when the fight was over. The cable was cut, the sails hoisted, and in a few minutes the *Primrose* was under way for England, with the mayor of Bilbao below the hatches. No second vessel got away. If Philip had meant to frighten Elizabeth he could not have taken a worse means of doing it, for he had exasperated that particular part of the English population which was least afraid of him. He had broken faith besides, and had seized some hundreds of merchants and sailors who had gone merely to relieve Spanish distress. Elizabeth, as usual, would not act herself. She sent no ships from her own navy to demand reparation; but she gave the adventurers a free hand. The London and Plymouth citizens determined to read Spain a lesson which should make an impression. They had the worst fears for the fate of the prisoners; but if they could not save, they could avenge them. Sir Francis Drake, who wished for nothing better than to be at work again, volunteered his services, and a fleet was collected at Plymouth of twenty-five sail, every one of them fitted out by private enterprise. No finer armament, certainly no better-equipped armament, ever left the English shores. The expenses were, of course, enormous. Of seamen and soldiers there were between two and three thousand. Drake's name was worth an army. The cost was to be recovered out of the expedition somehow; the Spaniards were to be made to pay for it; but how or when was left to Drake's judgment. This time there was no second in command sent by the friends of

Spain to hang upon his arm. By universal consent he had the absolute command. His instructions were merely to inquire at Spanish ports into the meaning of the arrest. Beyond that he was left to go where he pleased and do what he pleased on his own responsibility. The Queen said frankly that if it proved convenient she intended to disown him. Drake had no objection to being disowned, so he could teach the Spaniards to be more careful how they handled Englishmen. What came of it will be the subject of the next lecture. Father Parsons said the Protestant traders of England had grown effeminate and dared not fight. In the ashes of their own smoking cities the Spaniards had to learn that Father Parsons had misread his countrymen. If Drake had been given to heroics he might have left Virgil's lines inscribed above the broken arms of Castile at St. Domingo :

En ego victa situ quam veri effeta senectus
Arma inter regum falsa formidine ludit :
Respice ad hæc.

J. A. FROUDE.

A Love Song.

IN the Spring, when lilies came,
 And crocus set the woods aflame,
 All the world with Love's delight
 Flushed and glowed from dawn till night.
 All day long the happy birds
 Sang and sang, and found no words,
 And my heart the whole day long
 Sang to thee a wordless song.

When the roses white and red
 On the winds their fragrance shed,
 Through a world of sunlight went
 Love and laughter and content ;
 And my heart from leafy June
 Caught and kept the strange, sweet tune ;
 Brook and branch, and bird and bee,
 Sang of thee, my sweet, of thee.

Now, when golden Autumn fills
 The purple wine-cup of the hills,
 'Mid their happy harvesting,
 Still of Love the reapers sing ;
 When the plover wheel and fly
 Black against the shining sky,
 In my heart the old refrain
 Swells and falls and swells again.

When Winter comes, with icy breast,
 And holly flashing in his crest,
 All Love's singers sweet are gone,
 Save the robin ; he alone
 Pipes his music, sweet and strong—
 Death alone can still his song.
 Like the robin, so shall I
 Sing to thee, Love, till I die.

D. J. ROBERTSON.

Among the Wood-goblins.

WHEN, according to Slavonic lore, the angel Lucifer was driven from Heaven, there fell together with him a great number of other beings, all more or less malignant, who had fought under his banner for their position in the abode of the Blessed. Among these spirits, four principal ones conferred upon our planet the honour of selecting it for their abode. These were the *Domovóy*, or home-spirits; the *Vodyánnui*, or water-spirits; the *Vozdooshnui*, or air-spirits; and the *Liéshui*, or wood-goblins. Of these, the first are by far the most numerous; for there is no house which is without its *Domovóy*, who—presumably—is in a state of grace, for he is by no means altogether evilly disposed in these our days, but acts rather as the benevolent guardian of those under his own roof, protecting them from the *Domovóys* of their neighbours, who would otherwise ill-treat them. Thus each *Domovóy* is good to his own people, but not quite so benevolent towards others; in fact, like many other folk, his character depends very much upon the point of view from which he is regarded.

The *Vozdooshnui* interfere but little with the human race; but the water-spirits occasionally give the peasant-folk in their neighbourhood a good deal of trouble, drowning them and their horses and cattle when they attempt to bathe, eating their standing crops at night, and otherwise proving that it would have been better for us if they had taken up their abode in those warmer regions selected by their captain for his permanent quarters, instead of in those cool haunts which form their domicile within the limits of this our planet.

But for a people living much in the neighbourhood of the pine forests which abound in Russia it is natural that the fourth spirit, the *Liéshui*, or wood-goblin (from *liés*, a wood), should be, next to the house-ghost, the spirit best known and most frequently met with by the peasants. This wood-goblin is a peculiarly sensi-

tive person, according to Slavonic folk-lore, and must be very carefully dealt with; otherwise he will, in his rage, demolish the forest trees, the standing crops, and any property he can get hold of to destroy. Especially will he wreak his vengeance upon the careless peasant through the medium of his flocks and herds. If the propitiatory offerings or ceremonies have not been punctually attended to, the Liéshui will give the word to his hand-slaves the bear and the wolf, and these will quickly fall upon flocks and herds and decimate them in the twinkling of an eye.

In former years the herds were never sent out to pasture in spring without certain pagan ceremonies being previously gone through for the propitiation of the Liéshui; and though Mother Church has done her very best to substitute for such ceremonies the services of the Church, specially prepared for the pacification of the superstitious moujik, yet his faith in the traditional functions of his forefathers for the proper propitiation of the various spirits whom he still firmly believes in dies very hard in the mind of poor Ivan Ivanitch; and there are still many villages in the more inaccessible parts of Russia where the inhabitants like to go through the old pagan functions of placating the wood and water goblins, by way of making things quite safe, even after the priest has been with his *ikon* and performed the usual Church services for the blessing of the water, or of the herd, or of the house. As some of these old pagan ceremonies are rather peculiar and interesting, I propose to give in the following sketch some idea of the manner in which moujiks regard these matters, and of the means they employ to insure their flocks and herds against the violence of the Liéshui when they are convinced that they have incurred the animosity of one of these shady characters.

Summer was 'a comin' in,' and a certain serious matter began to weigh upon the mind of the starost of Kushlefska, which is a prosperous village in a wheat-growing district of Archangel; for its settlement could not much longer be delayed. The fact is, that early in the winter Kushlefska had been so unfortunate as to lose the services of its *pastuch*, or cowherd, death having carried off the old man during the slack time—when the cows were all at home, that is, and needed no one to look after them. But now that summer was approaching, and the cows would soon be wanting to be up and about, wandering in search of the fresh young blades of grass over communal pasture and moorland, it was very awkward to feel that there was no *pastuch* to personally

conduct them in their wanderings, and that no single candidate had been near the place to apply for the post. None of the villagers would so much as think of accepting the office, for it was but a poorly paid billet, and was generally held by someone outside the august *Hozyains* and their families—some *rabotnik* who had wandered into the village in need of a job and was appointed *pastuch* for as long as he would keep the situation.

Hence when, one Sunday afternoon, as the assembly of the *Hozyains* composing the Mir of Kushlefska were met to consider matters of local interest and to settle certain business questions appertaining to their jurisdiction, it was considered rather a stroke of good luck for the community that a ragged moujik of middle age suddenly appeared at the door of the *Sobranье*, doffed his cap and crossed himself towards the *ikon* in the corner of the room, made a bow to those present, grinned, scratched his head, and said:

‘Good day, brothers; don’t leave me!’

The reader must not suppose that the newcomer in thus addressing the Souls of Kushlefska was seized with a sudden misgiving that those gentlemen might all arise and depart just as he had arrived; the Russian expression ‘Don’t leave me!’ merely indicates a desire to be heard, and if possible assisted, and is a common mode for an inferior to commence a conversation with a superior.

‘What do you want?’ asked the starost.

‘Why—work,’ said the man; ‘some job—bread to eat—any kind of work will do for me.’ This seemed most providential, and the starost looked meaningly around at his lieutenants.

‘What do you know—what can you do?’ he asked.

‘Better ask me what I *can’t* do!’ replied the new man; ‘I can do a bit of anything and everything!’

‘You can drink vodka, I bet!’ said one of the Souls, ‘or you’d have pockets in your clothes and something inside them!’ This was in rude allusion to the attire of the newcomer.

‘Well, if you come to that, brother,’ said that ragged individual, ‘the moujik who doesn’t take kindly to vodka is like a fish who can’t swim; I can drink vodka as well as most—try me, if you don’t believe it.’

‘Do you understand the duties of a *pastuch*?’ the starost inquired. The man laughed scornfully.

‘You give me a *pastuch*’s pipe, starost, and I’ll show you what I can do! I can blow the pipe so that not only the cows of my

own village follow me home, but the cattle from the next village as well! Why, all the Liéshui (wood-spirits) come flying up from miles around when I play, and settle on the trees like *riabchiks* (tree partridges) to listen! Wolves come and fawn at my feet! You won't find a pastuch like me in all Russia!'

The fact is, the stranger was exceedingly anxious to obtain the situation of pastuch; it was just the sort of loafing work to suit him; hence his eloquence.

Now, when the patron of a situation is no less anxious to give away the office at his disposal than the candidate is to obtain it, there is not much need to waste words over the appointment; therefore Radion Vasilitch was speedily engaged as the village pastuch, at a salary of four roubles per month, and entered at once upon his duties.

The appointment was made none too soon; for the very next day was that on which the cattle were annually allowed to make their first excursion beyond their own yard gates. Radion appeared in full pastuch costume at earliest morn, and blew his long horn or pipe in a manner which proved that he was no novice in the accomplishment. Out came the cows into the street, a noisy, happy herd, lowing and gambolling in exuberant but ungainly joy, for they were very naturally delighted to learn that their long captivity was over. Each house contributed its one or two or four cows to the herd as Radion passed trumpeting down the street, and at last the starost's house was reached.

'Starost!' shouted Radion, 'aren't you going to do what is necessary for the safety of the herd before I take them into the woods?'

'What do you mean?' asked the chief Soul, who was standing in *déshabille* at his own yard gate, watching the pastuch and his charge.

'Why, about the Liéshui. It is better to propitiate them—we always did on the first day of the season at Kirilova!'

'This is not Kirilova, my brother,' said the starost, 'but Kushlefka. We have no wood-spirits here. A good pastuch is better than charms and ceremonies.'

'Very well; but don't blame me if anything happens!' said Radion; and blowing a mighty blast upon his strident instrument, he accompanied his cows down the road. Presently the whole party branched off to the left across the ditch—the cows jumping it, most of them, in the inimitable manner of their tribe—struck across a patch of sandy common, reached a stretch of green

pasture-land beyond, distributed themselves over this natural banqueting-hall in picturesque blotches of whites and reds and blacks, and so gradually passed out of sight and went their happy way until the evening. The village meanwhile would see no more of them, but left them with perfect confidence to the care of the pastuch, who received, or was to receive, the sum of four roubles per month for the office of taking the cows 'off their minds.'

Radion performed his work with perfect success, and brought his herd home safely, in spite of the danger to be apprehended from Liéshui and their chosen agents for destruction, the wolves and bears.

Days passed, and still all went well. Radion's playing of the blatant cowhorn was all that he had described it, and his success as pastuch was complete. He occasionally brought back with him a hare which he had managed, somehow, to capture; or a greyhen, whom he had discovered upon her nest with nine little cheeping blackcock beneath her. Radion had none of the chivalry of the sportsman, and thought nothing of taking the 'matka,' or mother-bird, from her helpless fledgelings, leaving them to their fate and the foxes and the grey-hooded crows. His game he would distribute as gifts to those of the wives of the moujiks who had the most cows; for Radion's aim in life, as is the aim and object of every true Russian peasant, was '*na chaiok*,' or *tea money*, so called because tea would be the very last thing upon which any moujik would think of laying out a gratuity. Radion hoped, then, for substantial *na chaioks* at the end of the season from those whose large property in cattle he had safeguarded successfully. But one fine evening, while the summer was yet young and Radion still more or less of a novelty in the village, a terrible thing happened, of a sort to make those in the community who had laughed at the superstitious pastuch and his fears of the Liéshui to look grave, and ask themselves whether there was not, after all, more in this question of wood-spirits than appeared at first sight. True, the village had never hitherto received cause to fear the Liéshui, or, indeed, to regard them as anything more than mere story-book beings, having no existence save in the pages of nursery literature and in the brains of loafers like Radion; but now!

The facts of the matter were as follows. Radion brought home the herd of cows on a certain evening *one short*. The pastuch arrived from the pasture looking pale and haggard, escorted the herd as far as the village street, and himself turned

aside into the house of the starost, whom he found lying asleep upon the top of his stove. Radion spent a considerable time bowing and crossing himself before the *ikon*, prostrating himself several times, and touching with his forehead the bare boards of the floor. Then he turned his wild eyes towards the chief moujik.

'Starost,' he said, 'a fearful thing has happened. The Liéshui are against us. We have offended the Spirits of the Forest, in whose service are the bears and the wolves. Let us propitiate them before it is too late, or a worse thing may happen!'

'Worse than what?' asked the starost. 'It appears to me, my brother, that you are drunk.'

'I may be a little drunk, brother Ivan Ivanitch,' replied Radion, 'but who would not take a little drop if he had been chased by two enormous wolves and laughed at by the king of the Liéshui himself?'

'Are you sure it was not a *bielaya kooropatka*?' (willow grouse) said the unbelieving starost. 'Even sober men have ere now mistaken the cry of the kooropatka for the laugh of the Liéshui.'

'And what of the wolves, your charitableness, and the cow that is eaten up together with her bones and skin?' retorted the offended pastuch.

'What!' cried Ivan Ivanitch, starting to his feet; 'not one of my cows, Radion Vasilitch?' The starost was serious enough now!

'Yes, Ivan Ivanitch; and the best cow in the village, and the fattest. Do you think the wolf-hunters of the Liéshui do not know which is the best of the herd? As for me, though I blew my horn—yes, and cracked my long whip at them and shouted—all I could do was to attract their attention to myself instead of to the cow. Starost, I would not again go through that fearful chase for ten times four roubles a month. They pursued me to the foot of a tree, Ivan Ivanitch—it is a true word' (here Radion turned towards the *ikon* and crossed himself); 'and had I not remembered to call upon the holy saint and equal to the Apostles, my patron, they would have eaten me as well as the cow Masha! As it was, from the top of a tree I saw the furious beasts fall upon poor Masha, tear her to pieces, and eat her entirely up, so that not a trace remained, while an invisible Liéshui spirit laughed aloud until every particle was consumed. Then the wolves came, licking their lips, to the foot of my tree, and, looking up at me,

howled three times, and vanished. It was with difficulty that I succeeded in reaching the village, for my knees have no strength, and my heart is as the heart of a lamb or of a sucking-pig after this terrible day.'

The starost looked grave and troubled. That these wolves should have appeared after Radion's warning as to the Liéshui was curious. That they should have selected his cow would surely indicate a deliberate intention on the part of the spirits—if, indeed, the spirits were at the bottom of the trouble—to accentuate the significance of their action; for they had eaten Masha, and that cow represented the starost; therefore the Liéshui had struck their blow at the starost, who, again, was the representative man of the community. This surely would mean that the spirits desired to demonstrate their displeasure with the community through their representative, the starost. A meeting of the Mir was held that very evening in order to discuss the situation, and a Soul was sent on horseback to the priest of the Selo, five miles away, to ask for guidance in the emergency which had arisen. Late at night the deputy returned to the village bearing a message from the priest. The message was extremely to the point, though very short, and ran thus: 'Tell the starost and his moujiks and the pastuch that they are a set of fools. The only spirits they have to keep clear of are vodka and cognac.'

This was encouraging, if somewhat lacking in courtesy. But a difficulty arose. The pastuch professed to be so terrified with his experiences of the preceding day that he really could not bring himself to enter the woods again unless the usual ceremonies were first performed to preserve the herd from the perils of the forest. However, a *na chaiok* of a rouble from the public funds proved a strong argument, and Radion was persuaded to convoy his cows as usual into their pastures.

All went well on this occasion and the day after, but on the evening of the third day another catastrophe happened. Radion returned *minus* two more of the cattle placed under his care—a second cow and the only bull of the herd. Radion himself was in a terrible state. He raved and laughed and cried and cursed like one demented. To the ordinary observer he would have appeared to be merely rather far gone in alcoholic poisoning; but this, of course, could not be the case: the *znaharka*, the wise woman of the village, said so. It was the simple and natural result of great terror, she explained. In all probability

he had seen the Liéshui, or at least their wolf-slaves, and the terror of it had maddened him.

This proved to be the case; for after a night's rest Radion was so far recovered that he gave a history of the events of the preceding day. These were, it appeared, almost a repetition of those of last week, excepting that, in addition to the horrors before experienced, a huge bear had come out of the forest, as well as the two wolves, and had eaten an entire cow to itself. After the meal it had climbed the tree upon which the affrighted Radion had taken refuge, seated itself beside him, growled and roared three times in his face, and climbed down again, tearing his trousers as it did so. Radion showed a long slit in the leg of his nether garments, which, of course, proved the truth of his story.

After this there could be no further shilly-shallying. The *znaharka* called upon the starost, and spoke to that official very seriously upon the subject. She knew the details of the proper function to be performed before a herd can be considered safe from interference by the Liéshui, and would be pleased to take the management of the affair into her hands. Her fee was three roubles. The cows could not possibly be sent to pasture again before this most necessary function had been performed. No one would send their cows out under the circumstances—how could they? It was tempting Providence, or, at all events, insulting the wood-spirits, which came to the same thing. Besides, the pastuch had declared he would not go out again, and who was to take his place?

A meeting of the Mir was convened without further delay, and it was determined to allow the wise woman to proceed with her preparations. On the morrow, early in the morning, the ceremony should be performed. On this particular day the cows remained at home. Radion could not think of risking his life a third time, and as for the owners of the cows, there was hardly one who would have been foolhardy enough to allow his cattle to wander through the woods under present circumstances.

When the morrow came the *znaharka* was at hand as the herd moved down the street in order to watch which of the cows took the lead, for her first ceremony was dependent upon that circumstance. Having fixed upon the leader she tied a bit of red wool round its neck, as a symbol that thus were the throats of the wild beasts bound, lest they should swallow the cows. Next the *znaharka* walked solemnly three times round the entire herd, locking and unlocking a padlock the while, in token that thus

were the jaws of the grey wolves locked, lest they should rend the cattle. After the third time the padlock was finally locked and buried.

Then came a sort of liturgy, which the wise woman pronounced standing in front of the herd, the meek animals being much surprised at the proceedings, and at the unusual delay in allowing them to get away to their pasture.

'Deaf man, canst thou hear us? No. Then pray God the grey wolf may not hear our cattle in the forest.

'Lame man, canst thou overtake us? Nay, I cannot. Then pray God that the grey wolves overtake not these cows.

'Blind man, canst thou see us? No. Then pray God the grey wolf may not perceive our cattle in the woods.'

This was the end of the function, and the poor cows, who had been somewhat impatiently whisking away the mosquitoes and horseflies for the last half hour, were at length allowed to proceed. Radion expressed himself satisfied and went after them; he was no longer afraid of the wood-spirits, he declared; they were now powerless to harm him.

After this matters went quietly enough at Kushlefka. Nothing happened to the herd or to the pastuch himself, for both were protected by the solemnities conducted as above by the *znaharka*. But the bull which had formed a meal for the two demon wolves on the occasion of their second attack upon the herd was still unreplaced, and it was necessary to buy one somewhere. The starost, therefore, allowed it to be known far and wide that Kushlefka was in need of a bull and open to offers.

In a few days bulls began to come in, bulls of every kind; but for some little while the right bull could not be found: one was too savage, another too big, a third too small. A week went by, and still Kushlefka remained without the head and ornament to its herd of cows. Then a most curious and astonishing circumstance happened. One morning, not long after the pastuch had set out with his cattle for the day's wandering over moor and fen, a man arrived from a village distant some seven or eight miles through the forest, accompanied by a bull whose appearance filled the minds of those who witnessed its arrival with astonishment and some awe. If they had not already known that old Vasilice, the late lord of the herd, was in his grave, or rather in the stomachs of two grey demon wolves of the forest, they would have said that this new bull was Vasilice *redivivus*. He was strangely like. From the brown stocking on his off hind-leg to the one black ear

and brown-black patch on his nose—big white body and all—he was the very image of Vasilice. What made it the more astonishing was, that no sooner did the animal arrive in the village street than he walked straight to the lodgings of the late lamented Vasilice, and would take no denial, but must needs be let into the yard, and thence to the cowshed, where he immediately sniffed about as one who knows the lie of the land, helping himself, presently, to hay and other delicacies which he found to hand, as though it were his own of right. In vain his owner tried to turn him out of shed and yard; he would not budge; indeed, he surveyed the man with a look of mild surprise, as who should say, 'What on earth is the matter with *you*? Go back to Drevnik if you like, but as for me, I stay here!'

Deep was the astonishment of Kushlefka. This thing was a mystery. Could the bull be the spirit of the departed Vasilice? Some of the spectators spat on the ground, some crossed themselves; it depended upon how the suggestion took them.

But stay; the starost has an idea. Vasilice used to have a faint mark of an old brand, a mere scar, on the off hindquarter. Ivan Ivanitch entered the shed and made a close inspection of the animal.

When he came out his face was grave; but his glance was serene and high, as of one who has triumphed over mysteries, and has discerned light through the darkness.

'It is Vasilice,' he said. 'Where did you buy him, brother?'

'At Drevnik, your mercifulness,' replied the seller.

'And from whom?'

'From a stranger, a pastuch, who drove him, with a fine cow, into Drevnik—oh—a fortnight ago nearly; he said he had been commissioned to sell the pair by a moujik in Koltusha, which your mercifulness knows is twenty versts away, and that——'

'Should you know the man again?' interrupted the starost.

'Certainly, for we drank together for half an hour at the Kabak after the bargain for the bull and cow. A ragged pastuch—lantern-jawed, and red-hair—and with a scrag beard——'

'Good,' said the starost. 'You shall have back the money you paid for Vasilice, and a three-rouble note for your trouble! Now leave him here, and come back to-morrow with the cow. Brothers,' he continued, 'not a word to Radion about the bull Vasilice when he returns! I will settle with Radion to-morrow.'

Then the starost paid a long visit to Yegor, the *ochotnik* (sportsman) of the village, and made certain arrangements.

Yegor was a great hunter, and had slain many bears and wolves, making a good living by the sale of their skins.

On the following day, while Radion was loafing the morning away amid his cows, counting his ill-gotten gains and meditating as to how he should spend them as soon as he got safely out of Kushlefka and back home again, he suddenly perceived something which sent his lazy blood, for once, coursing through his veins at a speed which made the beating of his heart a painful function. Issuing from the dark fringe of the forest, which lay but a short fifty yards away, came a procession alarming enough to frighten out of his very wits a man with five times the courage of Radion; first a bear—a big one—and at his heels two wolves. Behind the wolves came a wild shape—half human, but with the head of a bear. The procession moved slowly in Radion's direction, who, his limbs being fixed and frigid with terror, was entirely unable to move. Not so the herd. Snorting and bellowing, with tails up and heads down, every cow was instantly in motion, and galloping for dear life across the moor. Radion would have shrieked in the anguish of his fright, but his tongue clave to his palate, and he could utter no sound but a hoarse rattle. He tried to pray and to cross himself, but could not raise his arm.

By this time the awful procession had reached him and stood motionless around him. If Radion had not been half dead with fear he must have noticed something strange about the style of locomotion of the terrible beasts, as well as a certain fixedness of expression about the eyes of all four. But he was too far gone to observe anything. At last the figure half man and half beast spoke:

'Radion—Radion,' it said sepulchrally, 'liar! Where are the bull Vasilice and the cows Masha and Katia?'

Radion's dry lips moved, but he could utter never a word.

'Radion—liar!' the voice continued, 'you have lied in the village to the dishonour of the Liéshui, of whom I am king. Where is the money you received for Vasilice and the two cows?' Radion's hand made a movement towards his wallet, but had not strength to carry itself so far.

'Radion—liar and thief,' continued the king of the Liéshui, 'you are doomed—you must die! Advance, wolves, tear and destroy; rend, bear!'

But before the terrific animals could obey the injunctions of

their chief Radion's tongue had freed itself, and with a fearful yell the unfortunate pastuch fell senseless upon the heather.

Then that mercenary Liéshui king relieved Radion of his wallet, after which he retired quickly into the forest, followed by his three slaves, carrying their heads under their arms, the weather being hot.

When Radion returned to the village at night his face was as the countenance of those who have been through great tribulation; and when the herd awaited the sound of his horn next morning, and wandered aimlessly about the village street, headed by Vasilice *redivivus* (whom they were very glad to see back again among them), they were doomed to a sad disappointment; for it was discovered that their faithful pastuch had departed, leaving no address.

FRED. WHISHAW.

*The Idle Earth.*¹

THE bare fallows of a factory are of short duration, and occur at lengthened intervals. There are the Saturday afternoons—four or five hours' shorter time; there are the Sundays—fifty-two in number; a day or two at Christmas, at Midsummer, at Easter. Fifty-two Sundays, plus fifty-two half-days Saturdays; eight days more for *bonâ-fide* holidays—in all, eighty-six days on which no labour is done. This is as near as may be just one quarter of the year spent in idleness. But how fallacious is such a calculation! for overtime and night-work make up far more than this deficient quarter; and therefore it may safely be said that man works the whole year through, and has no bare fallow. But earth—idle earth—on which man dwells, has a much easier time of it. It takes nearly a third of the year out in downright leisure, doing nothing but inchoating; a slow process indeed, and one which all the agricultural army have of late tried to hasten, with very indifferent success. Winter seed sown in the fall of the year does not come to anything till the spring; spring seed is not reaped till the autumn is at hand. But it will be argued that this land is not idle, for during those months the seed is slowly growing—absorbing its constituent parts from the atmosphere, the earth, the water; going through astonishing metamorphoses; outdoing the most wonderful laboratory experiments with its untaught, instinctive chemistry. All true enough; and hitherto it has been assumed that the ultimate product of these idle months is sufficient to repay the idleness; that in the *coup* of the week of reaping there is a dividend recompensing the long, long days of development. Is it really so? This is not altogether a question which a practical man used to City formulas of profit and loss might ask. It is a question to which, even at this

¹ [The date at which this paper was written is unknown. The problems it discusses are, however, no nearer solution now than then, and the unfavourable conditions noted by Jefferies have become intensified.—Ed.]

hour, farmers themselves—most unpractical of men—are requiring an answer. There is a cry arising throughout the country that farms do not pay; that a man with a moderate 400 acres and a moderate 1,000*l.* of his own, with borrowed money added, cannot get a reasonable remuneration from those acres. These say they would sooner be hotel-keepers, tailors, grocers—anything but farmers. These are men who have tried the task of subduing the stubborn earth, which is no longer bountiful to her children. Much reason exists in this cry, which is heard at the market ordinary, in the lobby, at the club meetings—wherever agriculturists congregate, and which will soon force itself out upon the public. It is like this. Rents have risen. Five shillings per acre makes an enormous difference, though nominally only an additional 100*l.* on 400 acres. But as in agricultural profits one must not reckon more than 8 per cent., this 5*s.* per acre represents nearly another 1,000*l.* which must be invested in the business, and which must be made to return interest to pay the additional rent. If that cannot be done, then it represents a dead 100*l.* per annum taken out of the agriculturist's pocket.

Then—labour, the great agricultural *crux*. If the occupier pays 3*s.* per week more to seven men, that adds more than another 50*l.* per annum to his outgoings, to meet which you must somehow make your acres represent another 500*l.* Turnpikes fall in, and the roads are repaired at the ratepayers' cost. Compulsory education—for it is compulsory in reality, since it compels voluntary schools to be built—comes next, and as generally the village committee mull matters, and have to add a wing, and rebuild, and so forth, till they get in debt, there grows up a rate which is a serious matter, not by itself, but added to other things. Just as in great factories they keep accounts in decimals because of the vast multitude of little expenses which are in the aggregate serious—each decimal is equivalent to a rusty nail or so—here on our farm threepence or fourpence in the pound added to threepence or sixpence ditto for voluntary church-rate, puts an appreciable burden on the man's back. The tightness, however, does not end here; the belt is squeezed closer than this. No man had such long credit as the yeoman of yore (thirty years ago is 'of yore' in our century). Butcher and baker, grocer, tailor, draper, all gave him unlimited credit as to *time*. As a rule, they got paid in the end; for a farmer is a fixture, and does not have an address for his letters at one place and live in another. But modern trade manners are different. The trader is himself pressed. Competition galls his

heel. He has to press upon his customers, and in place of bills sent in for payment once a year, and actual cash transfer in three, we have bills punctually every quarter, and due notice of county court if cheques are not sent at the half-year. So that the agriculturist wants more ready cash; and as his returns come but once a year, he does not quite see the fairness of having to swell other men's returns four times in the same period. Still a step further, and a few words will suffice to describe the increased cost of all the materials supplied by these tradesmen. Take coals, for instance. This is a fact so patent that it stares the world in the face. A farmer, too, nowadays has a natural desire to live as other people in his station of life do. He cannot reconcile himself to rafty bacon, cheese, radishes, turnip-tops, homespun cloth, smock frocks. He cannot see why his girls should milk the cows or wheel out manure from the yards any more than the daughters of tradesmen; neither that his sons should say 'Ay' and 'Noa,' and exhibit a total disregard of grammar and ignorance of all social customs. The piano, he thinks, is quite as much in its place in his cool parlour as in the stuffy so-called drawing-room at his grocer's in the petty town hard by, where they are so particular to distinguish the social ranks of 'professional tradesmen' from common tradesmen. Here in all this, even supposing it kept down to economical limits, there exists a considerable margin of expenditure greater than in our forefathers' time. True, wool is dearer, meat dearer; but to balance that put the increased cost of artificial manure and artificial food—two things no farmer formerly bought—and do not forget that the seasons rule all things, and are quite as capricious as ever, and when there is a bad season the loss is much greater than it used to be, just as the foundering of an ironclad costs the nation more than the loss of a frigate.

Experience every day brings home more and more the fatal truth that moderate farms do not pay, and there are even ominous whispers about the 2,000 acres system. The agriculturist says that, work how he may, he only gets 8 per cent. per annum; the tradesman, still more the manufacturer, gets only 2 per cent. each time, but he turns his money over twenty times a year, and so gets 40 per cent. per annum. Eight per cent. is a large dividend on one transaction, but it is very small for a whole year—a year, the $\frac{1}{30}$ of a man's whole earning period, if we take him to be in a business at twenty-five and to be in full work till fifty-five, a fair allowance. Now, why is it that this cry arises

that agriculture will not pay? and why is it that the farmer only picks up 8 per cent.? The answer is simple enough. It is because the earth is idle a third of the year. So far as actual cash return is concerned, one might say it was idle eleven out of the twelve months. But that is hardly fair. Say a third of the year.

The earth does not continue yielding a crop day by day as the machines do in the manufactory. The nearest approach to the manufactory is the dairy, whose cows send out so much milk per diem; but the cows go dry for their calves. Out of the tall chimney shaft there floats a taller column of dark smoke hour after hour; the vast engines puff and snort and labour perhaps the whole twenty-four hours through; the drums hum round, the shafts revolve perpetually, and each revolution is a penny gained. It may be only steel-pen making—pens, common pens, which one treats as of no value and wastes by dozens; but the iron-man thumps them out hour after hour, and the thin stream of daily profit swells into a noble river of gold at the end of the year. Even the pill people are fortunate in this: it is said that every second a person dies in this huge world of ours. Certain it is that every second somebody takes a pill; and so the millions of globules disappear, and so the profit is nearer 8 per cent. per hour than 8 per cent. per annum. But this idle earth takes a third of the year to mature its one single crop of pills; and so the agriculturist with his slow returns cannot compete with the quick returns of the tradesman and manufacturer. If he cannot compete, he cannot long exist; such is the modern law of business. As an illustration, take one large meadow on a dairy farm; trace its history for one year, and see what an idle workshop this meadow is. Call it twenty acres of first-class land at 2*l.* 15*s.* per acre, or 55*l.* per annum. Remember that twenty acres is a large piece on which some millions multiplied by millions of cubic feet of air play in a month, and in which an incalculable amount of force in the shape of sunlight is poured down in the summer. January sees this plot of a dull, dirty green, unless hidden by snow; the dirty green is a short, juiceless herbage. The ground is as hard as a brick with the frost. We will not stay now to criticise the plan of carting out manure at this period, or dwell on the great useless furrows. Look carefully round the horizon of the twenty acres, and there is not an animal in sight, not a single machine for making money, not a penny being turned. The cows are all in the stalls. February comes, March passes; the herbage grows

slowly; but still no machines are introduced, no pennies roll out at the gateways. The farmer may lean on the gate and gaze over an empty workshop, twenty acres big, with his hands in his pockets, except when he pulls out his purse to pay the hedgecutters who are clearing out the ditches, the women who have been stone-picking, and the carters who took out the manure, half of which stains the drains while the volatile part mixes with the atmosphere. This is highly profitable and gratifying. The man walks home, hears his daughter playing the piano, picks up the paper, sees himself described as a brutal tyrant to the labourer, and ten minutes afterwards in walks the collector of the voluntary rate for the village school which educates the labourers' children. April arrives; grass grows rapidly. May comes; grass is now long. But still not one farthing has been made out of that twenty acres. Five months have passed, and all this time the shafts in the manufactories have been turning and the quick coppers accumulating. Now it is June, and the mower goes to work; then the haymakers, and in a fortnight if the weather be good, a month if it be bad, the hay is ricked. Say it cost 1*l.* per acre to make the hay and rick it—*i.e.* 20*l.*—and by this time half the rent is due, or 27*l.* 10*s.* = total expenditure (without any profit as yet), 47*l.* 10*s.*, exclusive of stone-picking, ditch-cleaning, value of manure, &c. This by the way. The five months' idleness is the point at present. June is now gone. If the weather be showery the sharp-edged grass may spring up in a fortnight to a respectable height; but if it be a dry summer—and if it is not a dry summer the increased cost of haymaking runs away with profit—then it may be fully a month before there is anything worth biting. Say at the end of July (one more idle month) twenty cows are turned in, and three horses. One cannot estimate how long they may take to eat up the short grass, but certain it is that the beginning of November will see that field empty of cattle again; and fortunate indeed the agriculturist who long before that has not had to 'fodder' (feed with hay) at least once a day. Here, then, are five idle months in spring, one in summer, two in winter; total, eight idle months. But, not to stretch the case, let us allow that during a part of that time, though the meadow is idle, its produce—the hay—is being eaten and converted into milk, cheese and butter, or meat, which is quite correct; but, even making this allowance, it may safely be said that the meadow is absolutely idle for one-third of the year, or four months. That is looking at the matter in a mere pounds, shillings, and pence

light. Now look at it in a broader, more national view. Does it not seem a very serious matter that so large a piece of land should remain idle for that length of time? It is a reproach to science that no method of utilising the meadow during that eight months has been discovered. To go further, it is very hard to require of the agriculturist that he should keep pace with a world whose maxims day by day tend to centralise and concentrate themselves into the one canon, Time is Money, when he cannot by any ingenuity get his machinery to revolve more than once a year. In the old days the farmer belonged to a distinct class, a very isolated and independent class, little affected by the progress or retrogression of any other class, and not at all by those waves of social change which sweep over Europe. Now the farmer is in the same position as other producers: the fall or rise of prices, the competition of foreign lands, the waves of panic or monetary tightness, all tell upon him quite as much as on the tradesman. So that the cry is gradually rising that the idle earth will not pay.

On arable land it is perhaps even more striking. Take a wheat crop, for instance. Without going into the cost and delay of the three years of preparation under various courses for the crop, take the field just before the wheat year begins. There it lies in November, a vast brown patch, with a few rooks here and there hopping from one great lump to another; but there is nothing on it—no machine turning out materials to be again turned into money. On the contrary, it is very probable that the agriculturist may be sowing money on it, scarifying it with steam ploughing-engines, tearing up the earth to a great depth in order that the air may penetrate and the frost disintegrate the strong, hard lumps. He may have commenced this expensive process as far back as the end of August, for it is becoming more and more the custom to plough up directly after the crop is removed. All November, December, January, and not a penny from this broad patch, which may be of any size from fifteen to ninety acres, lying perfectly idle. Sometimes, indeed, persons who wish to save manure will grow mustard on it and plough it in, the profit of which process is extremely dubious. At the latter end of February or beginning of March, just as the season is early or late, dry or wet, in goes the seed—another considerable expense. Then April, May, June, July are all absorbed in the slow process of growth—a necessary process, of course, but still terribly slow, and not a penny of ready money coming in. If the seed was sown in October, as is usual on some soils, the effect is the same—the

crop does not arrive till next year's summer sun shines. In August the reaper goes to work, but even then the corn has to be threshed and sent to market before there is any return. Here is a whole year spent in elaborating one single crop, which may, after all, be very unprofitable if it is a good wheat year, and the very wheat over which such time and trouble have been expended may be used to fat beasts, or even to feed pigs. All this, however, and the great expense of preparation, though serious matters enough in themselves, are beside our immediate object. The length of time the land is useless is the point. Making every possible allowance, it is not less than one-third of the year—four months out of the twelve. For all practical—*i.e.* monetary—purposes it is longer than that. No wonder that agriculturists aware of this fact are so anxious to get as much as possible out of their one crop—to make the one revolution of their machinery turn them out as much money as possible. If their workshop must be enforcedly idle for so long, they desire that when in work there shall be full blast and double tides. Let the one crop be as heavy as it can. Hence the agitation for compensatory clauses, enabling the tenant to safely invest all the capital he can procure in the soil. How else is he to meet the increased cost of labour, of rent, of education, of domestic materials; how else maintain his fair position in society? The demand is reasonable enough; the one serious drawback is the possibility that, even with this assistance, the idle earth will refuse to move any faster.

We have had now the experience of many sewage-farms where the culture is extremely 'high.' It has been found that these farms answer admirably where the land is poor—say, sandy and porous—but on fairly good soil the advantage is dubious, and almost limited to growing a succession of rye-grass crops. After a season or two of sewage soaking the soil becomes so soft that in the winter months it is unapproachable. Neither carts nor any implements can be drawn over it; and then in the spring the utmost care has to be exercised to keep the liquid from touching the young plants, or they wither up and die. Sewage on grass lands produces the most wonderful results for two or three years, but after that the herbage comes so thick and rank and 'strong' that cattle will not touch it; the landlord begins to grumble, and complains that the land, which was to have been improved, has been spoilt for a long time to come. Neither is it certain that the employment of capital in other ways will lead to a continuous

increase of profit. There are examples before our eyes where capital has been unsparingly employed, and upon very large areas of land, with most disappointing results. In one such instance five or six farms were thrown into one; straw, and manure, and every aid lavishly used, till a fabulous number of sheep and other stock was kept; but the experiment failed. Many of the farms were again made separate holdings, and grass laid down in the place of glowing cornfields. Then there is another instance, where a gentleman of large means and a cultivated and business mind, called in the assistance of the deep plough, and by dint of sheer subsoil ploughing grew corn profitably several years in succession. But after a while he began to pause, and to turn his attention to stock and other aids. It is not for one moment contended that the use of artificial manure, of the deep plough, of artificial food, and other improvements will not increase the yield, and so the profit of the agriculturist. It is obvious that they do so. The question is, Will they do so to an extent sufficient to repay the outlay? And, further, will they do so sufficiently to enable the agriculturist to meet the ever-increasing weight which presses on him? It would seem open to doubt. One thing appears to have been left quite out of sight by those gentlemen who are so enthusiastic about compensation for unexhausted improvements, and that is, if the landlord is to be bound down so rigidly, and if the tenant really is going to make so large a profit, most assuredly the rents will rise very considerably. How then? Neither the sewage system, nor the deep plough, nor the artificial manure has, as yet, succeeded in overcoming the *vis inertia* of the idle earth. They cause an increase in the yield of the one revolution of the agriculturist machine per annum; but they do not cause the machine to revolve twice or three times. Without a decrease in the length of this enforced idleness any very great increase of profit does not seem possible. What would any manufacturer think of a business in which he was compelled to let his engines rest for a third of the year? Would he be eager to sink his capital in such an enterprise?

The practical man will, of course, exclaim that all this is very true, but Nature is Nature, and must have its way, and it is useless to expect more than one crop per annum, and any talk of three or four crops is perfectly visionary. 'Visionary,' by the way, is a very favourite word with so-called practical men. But the stern logic of figures, of pounds, shillings, and pence, proves that the present condition of affairs cannot last much longer, and they

are the true 'visionaries' who imagine that it can. This enormous loss of time, this idleness, must be obviated somehow. It is a question whether the millions of money at present sunk in agriculture are not a dead loss to the country; whether they could not be far more profitably employed in developing manufacturing industries, or in utilising for home consumption the enormous resources of Southern America and Australasia; whether we should not get more to eat, and cheaper, if such was the case. Such a low rate of interest as is now obtained in agriculture—and an interest by no means secure either, for a bad season may at any time reduce it, and even a too good season—such a state of things is a loss, if not a curse. It is questionable whether the million or so of labourers representing a potential amount of force almost incalculable, and the thousands of young farmers throbbing with health and vigour, eager to *do*, would not return a far larger amount of good to the world and to themselves if, instead of waiting for the idle earth at home to bring forth, they were transported bodily to the broad savannahs and prairies, and were sending to the mother-country innumerable shiploads of meat and corn—unless, indeed, we can discover some method by which our idle earth shall be made to labour more frequently. This million or so of labourers and these thousands of young, powerfully made farmers literally do nothing at all for a third of the year but wait, wait for the idle earth. The strength, the will, the vigour latent in them is wasted. They do not enjoy this waiting by any means. The young agriculturist chafes under the delay, and is eager to *do*. They can hunt and course hares, 'tis true, but that is feeble excitement indeed, and feminine in comparison with the serious work which brings in money.

The idleness of arable and pasture land is as nothing compared to the idleness of the wide, rolling downs. These downs are of immense extent, and stretch through the very heart of the country. They maintain sheep, but in how small a proportion to the acreage! In the spring and summer the short herbage is cropped by the sheep; but it is short, and it requires a large tract to keep a moderate flock. In the winter the down is left to the hares and fieldfares. It has just as long a period of absolute idleness as the arable and pasture land, and when in work the yield is so very, very small.

After all, the very deepest ploughing is but scratching the surface. The earth at five feet beneath the level has not been disturbed for countless centuries. Nor would it pay to turn up

this subsoil over large areas, for it is nothing but clay, as many a man has found to his cost who, in the hope of a heavier crop, has dug up his garden half a spade deeper than usual. But when the soil really is good at that depth, we cannot get at it so as to turn it to practical account. The thin stratum of artificial manure which is sown is no more in comparison than a single shower after a drought of months; yet to sow too much would destroy the effect. No blame, then, falls upon the agriculturist, who is only too anxious to get a larger produce. It is useless charging him with incompetency. What countless experiments have been tried to increase the crop: to see if some new system cannot be introduced! With all its progress, how little real advance has agriculture made! All because of the stubborn, idle earth. Will not science some day come to our aid, and show how two crops or three may be grown in our short summers; or how we may even overcome the chill hand of winter? Science has got as far as this: it recognises the enormous latent forces surrounding us—electricity, magnetism; some day, perhaps, it may be able to utilise them. It recognises the truly overwhelming amount of force which the sun of summer pours down upon our fields, and of which we really make no use. To recognise the existence of a power is the first step towards employing it. Till it was granted that there was a power in steam the locomotive was impossible.

It would be easy to swell this notice of idle earth by bringing in all the waste lands, now doing nothing—the parks, deer forests, and so on. But that is not to the purpose. If the wastes were reclaimed and the parks ploughed up, that would in nowise solve the problem how to make the cultivated earth more busy. It is no use for a man who has a garden to lean on his spade, look over his boundary wall, and say, ‘Ah, if neighbour Brown would but dig up his broad green paths how many more potatoes he would grow!’ That would not increase the produce of the critic’s garden by one single cabbage. Certainly it is most desirable that all lands capable of yielding crops should be reclaimed, but one great subject for the agriculturist to study is, how to shorten the period of idleness in his already cultivated plots. At present the earth is so very idle.

RICHARD JEFFERIES.

The Lady of the Pool.

BY ANTHONY HOPE.

CHAPTER I.

A FIRM BELIEVER.

'I SEE Mr. Vansittart Mercer's at the Court again, mamma.'
 'Yes, dear. Lady Mercer told me he was coming. She wanted to consult him about Charlie.'

'She's always consulting him about Charlie, and it never makes any difference.'

Mrs. Bushell looked up from her needlework; her hands were full with needle and stuff, and a couple of pins protruded from her lips. She glanced at her daughter, who stood by the window in the bright blaze of a brilliant sunset, listlessly hitting the blind-cord and its tassel to and fro.

'The poor boy's very young still,' mumbled Mrs. Bushell through her pins.

'He's twenty-five last month,' returned Millicent. 'I know, because there's exactly three years between him and me.'

The sinking rays defined Miss Bushell's form with wonderful clearness. She was very tall, and the severe well-cut cloth gown she wore set off the stately lines of her figure. She had a great quantity of fair hair and a handsome face, spoilt somewhat by a slightly excessive breadth across the cheeks; as her height demanded or excused, her hands and feet were not small, though well shaped. Would Time have arrested his march for ever, there would have been small fault to find with Nature's gifts to Miss Bushell; but, as her mother said, Millie was just what she had been at twenty-one; and Mrs. Bushell was now extremely stout. Millie escaped the inference by discrediting her mother's recollection.

The young lady wore her hat, and presently she turned away from the window, remarking :

‘I think I shall go for a stroll. I’ve had no exercise to-day.’

Either inclination, or perhaps that threatening possibility from which she strove to avert her eyes, made Millie a devotee of active pursuits. She hunted, she rode, she played lawn-tennis, and, when at the seaside, golf; when all failed, she walked resolutely four or five miles on the high-road, swinging along at a healthy pace, and never pausing save to counsel an old woman or rebuke a truant urchin. On such occasions her manner (for we may not suppose that her physique aided the impression) suggested the benevolent yet stern policeman, and the vicar acknowledged in her an invaluable assistant. By a strange coincidence she seemed to suit the house she lived in—one of those large white square dwellings, devoid of ornament, yet possessing every substantial merit, and attaining, by virtue of their dimensions and simplicity, an effect of handsomeness denied to many more tricked-out buildings. The house satisfied; so did Millie, unless the judge were very critical.

‘I shall just walk round by the Pool and back,’ she added as she opened the door.

‘My dear, it’s four miles!’

‘Well, it’s only a little after six, and we don’t dine till eight.’

Encountering no further opposition than a sigh of admiration—three hundred yards was the limit of pleasure in a walk to her mother—Millie Bushell started on her way, dangling a neat ebony stick in her hand, and setting her feet down with a firm decisive tread. It did not take her long to cover the two miles between her and her destination. Leaving the road, she entered the grounds of the Court and, following a little path which ran steeply down hill, she found herself by the willows and reeds fringing the edge of the Pool. Opposite to her, on the higher bank, some seven or eight feet above the water, rose the temple, a small classical erection, used now, when at all, as a summer-house, but built to commemorate the sad fate of Agatha Merceron. The sun had just sunk, and the Pool looked chill and gloomy; the deep water under the temple was black and still. Millie’s robust mind was not prone to superstition, yet she was rather relieved to think that, with the sun only just gone, there was a clear hour before Agatha Merceron would come out of the temple, slowly and fearfully descend the shallow flight of marble steps, and lay herself

down in the water to die. That happened every evening, according to the legend, an hour after sunset—every evening, for the last two hundred years, since poor Agatha, bereft and betrayed, had found the Pool kinder than the world, and sunk her sorrow and her shame and her beauty there—such shame and such beauty as had never been before or after in all the generations of the Mercerons.

‘What nonsense it all is!’ said Millie aloud. ‘But I’m afraid Charlie is silly enough to believe it.’

As she spoke her eye fell on a Canadian canoe, which lay at the foot of the steps. She recognised it as Charlie Merceron’s, and, knowing that approach to the temple from the other side was to be gained only by a difficult path through a tangled wood, and that the canoe usually lay under a little shed a few yards from where she stood, she concluded that Charlie was in the temple. There was nothing surprising in that: it was a favourite haunt of his. She raised her voice and called to him. At first no answer came, and she repeated:

‘Charlie! Charlie!’

After a moment of waiting a head was thrust out of a window in the side of the temple—a head in a straw hat.

‘Hullo!’ said Charlie Merceron in tones of startled surprise. Then, seeing the visitor, he added: ‘Oh, it’s you, Millie! How did you know I was here?’

‘By the canoe, of course.’

‘Hang the canoe!’ muttered Charlie, and his head disappeared. A second later he came out of the doorway and down the steps. Standing on the lowest, he shouted—the Pool was about sixty feet across—‘What do you want?’

‘How rude you are!’ shouted Miss Bushell in reply.

Charlie got into the canoe and began to paddle across. He had just reached the other side, when Millie screamed:

‘Look, look, Charlie!’ she cried. ‘The temple!’

‘What?’

‘I—I saw something white at the window.’

Charlie got out of the canoe hastily.

‘What?’ he asked again, walking up to Miss Bushell.

‘I declare I saw something white at the window. Oh, Charlie! But it’s all——’

‘Bosh? Of course it is. There’s nothing in the temple.’

‘Well, I thought—I wonder you like to be there.’

‘Why shouldn’t I?’

The mysterious appearance not being repeated, Millie's courage returned.

'I thought you believed in the ghost,' she said, smiling.

'So I do, but I don't mind it.'

'You've never seen it?'

'Supposing I haven't? That doesn't prove it's not true.'

'But you're often here at the time?'

'Never,' answered Charlie with emphasis. 'I always go away before the time.'

'Then you'd better come now. Put the canoe to bed and walk with me.'

Charlie Merceron thrust his hands into his pockets and smiled at his companion. He was tall also, and just able to look down on her.

'No,' he said, 'I'm not going yet.'

'How rude—oh, there it is again, Charlie! I saw it! I'm—I'm frightened,' and her healthy colour paled a trifle, as she laid a hand on Charlie's arm.

'I tell you what,' observed Charlie. 'If you have fancies of this kind you'd better not come here any more—not in the evening, at all events. You know people who think they're going to see things always do see 'em.'

'My heart is positively beating,' said Miss Bushell. 'I—I don't quite like walking back alone.'

'I'll see you as far as the road,' Charlie conceded, and with remarkable promptitude he led the way, turning his head over his shoulder to remark:

'Really, if you're so nervous, you oughtn't to come here.'

'I never will again—not alone, I mean.'

Charlie had breasted the hill with such goodwill that they were already at the road.

'And you're really going back?' she asked.

'Oh, just for a few minutes. I left my book in the temple—I was reading there. She's not due for half an hour yet, you know.'

'What—what happens if you see her?'

'Oh, you die,' answered Charlie. 'Good-night;' and with a smile and a nod he ran down the hill towards the Pool.

Miss Bushell, cavalierly deserted, made her way home at something more than her usual rate of speed. She had never believed in that nonsense, but there was certainly something white at that window—something white that moved. Under the circumstances,

Charlie really might have seen her home, she thought, for the wood-fringed road was gloomy, and dusk coming on apace. Besides, where was the hardship in being her escort?

Doubtless none, Charlie would have answered, unless a man happened to have other fish to fry. The pace at which the canoe crossed the Pool and brought up at its old moorings witnessed that he had no leisure to spend on Miss Bushell. Leaping out, he ran up the steps into the temple, crying in a loud whisper:

'She's gone!'

The temple was empty, and Charlie, looking round in vexation, added:

'So has she, by Jingo!'

He sat down disconsolately on the low marble seat that ran round the little shrine. There were no signs of the book of which he had spoken to Millie Bushell. There were no signs of anybody whom he could have meant to address. Stay! One sign there was: a long hat-pin lay on the floor. Charlie picked it up with a sad smile.

'Agatha's,' he said to himself.

And yet, as everyone in the neighbourhood knew, poor Agatha Merceron went nightly to her phantom death bareheaded and with golden locks tossed by the wind. Moreover, the pin was of modern manufacture; moreover, ghosts do not wear—but there is no need to enter on debatable ground; the pin was utterly modern.

'Now, if uncle Van,' mused Charlie, 'came here and saw this——!' He carefully put the pin in his breast-pocket, and looked at his watch. It was exactly Agatha Merceron's time; yet Charlie leant back on his cold marble seat, put his hands in his pockets, and gazed up at the ceiling with the happiest possible smile on his face. For one steeped in family legends, worshipping the hapless lady's memory with warm devotion, and reputed a sincere believer in her ghostly wanderings, he awaited her coming with marvellous composure. In point of fact he had forgotten all about her, and there was nothing to prevent her coming, slipping down the steps, and noiselessly into the water, all unnoticed by him. His eyes were glued to the ceiling, the smile played on his lips, his ears were filled with sweet echoes, and his thoughts were far away. Perhaps the dead lady came and passed unseen. That Charlie did not see her was ridiculously slight evidence whereon to damn so ancient and picturesque a legend. He thought the same himself, for that night at dinner

—he came in late for dinner—he maintained the credit of the story with fierce conviction against Mr. Vansittart Merceron's scepticism.

CHAPTER II.

MISS WALLACE'S FRIEND.

IN old days the Mercerons had been great folk. They had held the earldom of Langbury and the barony of Warmley. A failure of direct descent in the male line extinguished the earldom; the Lady Agatha was the daughter of the last earl, and would have been Baroness Warmley had she lived. On her death that title passed to her cousin, and continued in that branch till the early days of the present century. Then came another break. The Lord Warmley of that day, a Regency dandy, had a son, but not one who could inherit his honours, and away went the barony to a yet younger branch, where, falling a few years later into female hands, it was merged in a brand-new viscounty, and was now waiting till chance again should restore it to an independent existence. From the Mercerons of the Court it was gone for ever, and the blot on their escutcheon which lost it them was a sore point, from which it behoved visitors and friends to refrain their tongues. The Regent had, indeed, with his well-known good nature, offered a baronetcy to hide the stain; but pride forbade, and the Mercerons now held no titles, save the modest dignity which Charlie's father, made a K.C.B. for services in the North-West Provinces, had left behind him to his widow. But the old house was theirs, and a comfortable remnant of the lands, and the pictures of the extinct earls and barons, down to him whose sins had robbed the line of its surviving rank and left it in a position, from an heraldic point of view, of doubtful respectability. Lady Merceron felt so acutely on the subject that she banished this last nobleman to the smoking-room. There was, considering everything, an appropriateness in that position, and he no longer vexed her eyes as she sat at meat in the dining-room. She had purposed a like banishment for Lady Agatha; but here Charlie had interceded, and the unhappy beauty hung still behind his mother's chair and opposite his own. It was just to remember that but for poor Agatha's fault and fate the present branch might never have enjoyed the honours at all; so Charlie urged to Lady Merceron,

catching at any excuse for keeping Lady Agatha. Lady Mercer's way of judging pictures may seem peculiar, but the fact is that she lacked what is called the sense of historical perspective: she did not see why our ancestors should be treated so tenderly and allowed, with a charitable reference to the change in manners, forgiveness for what no one to-day could hope to win a pardon. Mr. Vansittart Merceron smiled at his sister-in-law and shrugged his shoulders; but in vain. To the smoking-room went the wicked Lord Warmley, and Lady Agatha was remarkably lucky in that she did not follow him.

Mr. Vansittart, half-brother to the late Sir Victor, and twenty years younger than he, was a short thick-set man, with a smooth round white face, and a way of speaking so deliberate and weighty that it imparted momentousness to nothings and infallibility to nonsense. When he really had something sensible to say, and that was very fairly often, the effect was enormous. He was now forty-four, a widower, well off by his marriage, and a Member of Parliament. Naturally, Lady Merceron relied much on his advice, especially in what concerned her son; she was hazy about the characters and needs of young men, not knowing how they should be treated or what appealed to them. Amid her haziness, one fact only stood out clear. To deal with a young man, you wanted a man of the world. In this capacity Mr. Vansittart had now been sent for to the Court, the object of his visit being nothing less than the arrangement and satisfactory settlement of Charlie's future.

Mr. Vansittart approached the future through the present and the past. 'You wasted your time at school, you wasted your time at Oxford, you're wasting your time now,' he remarked, when Charlie and he were left alone after dinner.

Charlie was looking at Lady Agatha's picture. With a sigh he turned to his uncle.

'That's all very well,' he said tolerantly, 'but what is there for me to do?'

'If you took more interest in country pursuits it might be different. But you don't hunt, you shoot very seldom——'

'And very badly.'

'And not at all well, as you admit. You say you won't become a magistrate, you show no interest in politics or—er—social questions. You simply moon about.'

Charlie was vividly reminded of a learned judge whom he had once heard pronouncing sentence of death. His uncle's denuncia-

tion seemed to lack its appropriate conclusion—that he should be hanged by the neck till he was dead. He was roused to defend himself.

‘You’re quite wrong, uncle,’ he said. ‘I’m working hard. I’m writing a history of the family.’

‘A history of the family!’ groaned Mr. Vansittart. ‘Who wants one? Who’ll read one?’

‘From an antiquarian point of view——’ began Charlie stoutly.

‘Of all ways of wasting time, antiquarianism is perhaps the most futile;’ and Mr. Vansittart wiped his mouth with an air of finality.

‘Now the Agatha Merceron story,’ continued Charlie, ‘is in itself——’

‘Perhaps we’d better finish our talk to-morrow. The ladies will expect us in the garden.’

‘All right,’ said Charlie, with much content. He enjoyed himself more in the garden, for, while Lady Merceron and her brother-in-law took counsel, he strolled through the moonlit shrubberies with Mrs. Marland, and Mrs. Marland was very sympathetically interested in him and his pursuits. She was a little eager woman, the very antithesis in body and mind to Millie Bushell; she had plenty of brains but very little sense, a good deal of charm but no beauty, and, without any counterbalancing defect at all, a hearty liking for handsome young men. She had also a husband in the City.

‘Ghost-hunting again to-night, Mr. Merceron?’ she asked, glancing up at Charlie, who was puffing happily at a cigar.

‘Yes,’ he answered, ‘I’m very regular.’

‘And did you see anyone?’

‘I saw Millie Bushell.’

‘Miss Bushell’s hardly ghost-like, is she?’

‘Well,’ said Charlie meditatively, ‘I suppose if one was fat oneself one’s ghost would be fat, wouldn’t it?’

Mrs. Marland, letting the problem alone, laughed softly.

‘Poor Miss Bushell! If she heard you say that! Or if Lady Merceron heard you!’

‘It would hardly surprise my mother to hear that I thought Millie Bushell plump. She is plump, you know;’ and Charlie’s eyes expressed a candid homage to truth.

‘Oh, I know what’s being arranged for you.’

‘So do I.’

'And you'll do it. Oh, you think you won't, but you will. Men always end by doing what they're told.'

'Does Mr. Marland?'

'He begins by it,' laughed his wife.

'Is that why he's not coming till Saturday week?'

'Mr. Merceron! But what was Miss Bushell doing at the Pool? Did she come to find you?'

'Oh, no; just for a walk.'

'Poor girl!'

'Why?—It's good for her.'

'I didn't mean the walk.'

'I'd blush if there was light enough to make it any use, Mrs. Marland.'

'Oh, but I know there's something. You don't go there every evening to look for a dead lady, Mr. Merceron.'

Charlie stopped short, and took his cigar from his mouth.

'What?' he asked, a little abruptly.

'Well, I shall follow you some day, and I shouldn't be surprised if I met—not Agatha—but——'

'Well?' asked Charlie, with an uncertain smile.

'Why, poor Miss Bushell!'

Charlie laughed and replaced his cigar.

'What are we standing still for?' he said.

'I don't know. You stopped. She'd be such an ideal match for you.'

'Then I should never have done for you, Mrs. Marland.'

'My dear boy, I was married when you were still in Eton collars.'

They had completed the circuit of the garden, and now approached where Lady Merceron sat, enveloped in a shawl.

'Charlie!' she called. 'Here's a letter from Victor Sutton. He's coming to-morrow.'

'I didn't know you'd asked him,' said Charlie, with no sign of pleasure at the news. Victor had been at school and college with Charlie, and often, in his holidays, at the Court, for he was Sir Victor's godson. Yet Charlie did not love him. For the rest, he was very rich, and was understood to cut something of a figure in London society.

'Mr. Sutton? Oh, I know him,' exclaimed Mrs. Marland. 'He's charming!'

'Then you shall entertain him,' said Charlie. 'I resign him.'

'I can't think why you're not more pleased to have him here,

Charlie,' remarked Lady Merceron. 'He's very popular in London, isn't he, Vansittart?'

'I've met him at some very good houses,' answered Mr. Vansittart. And that, he seemed to imply, is better than mere popularity.

'The Bushells were delighted with him last time he was here,' continued Lady Merceron.

'There! A rival for you!' Mrs. Marland whispered.

Charlie laughed cheerfully. Sutton would be no rival of his, he thought; and if he and Millie liked one another, by all means let them take one another. A month before he would hardly have dismissed the question in so summary a fashion, for the habit of regarding Millie as a possibility and her readiness as a fact had grown strong by the custom of years, and, far as he was from a passion, he might not have enjoyed seeing her allegiance transferred to Victor Sutton. Certainly he would have suffered defeat from that hand with very bad grace. Now, however, everything was changed.

'Vansittart,' said Lady Merceron, 'Charlie and I want to consult you (she often coupled Charlie's hypothetical desire for advice with her own actual one in appeals to Mr. Vansittart) about Mr. Prime's rent.'

'Oh, at the old farm?'

'Yes. He wants another reduction.'

'He'll want to be paid for staying there next.'

'Well, poor man, he's had to take lodgers this summer—a thing he's never done before. Charlie, did you know that?'

'Yes,' said Charlie, interrupting an animated conversation which he had started with Mrs. Marland.

'Do you know who they are?' pursued his mother, wandering from Mr. Prime's rent to the more interesting subject of his lodgers.

'Ladies from London,' answered Charlie.

'Rather vague,' commented Mr. Vansittart. 'Young ladies or old ladies, Charlie?'

'Why does he want to know?' asked Mrs. Marland; but chaff had about as much effect on Mr. Vansittart as it would have on an ironclad. He seemed not to hear, and awaited an answer with a bland smile. In truth, he thought Mrs. Marland a silly woman.

'Young, I believe,' answered Charlie, in a careless tone.

'It's curious I've not seen them about,' said Lady Merceron. 'I pass the farm almost every day. Who are they, Charlie?'

'One's a Miss Wallace. She's engaged to Willie Prime.'

'To Willie? Fancy!'

'H'm! I think,' remarked Mr. Vansittart, 'that, from the point of view of a reduction of rent, these lodgers are a delusion. Of course she stays with Prime if she's going to marry his son.'

'Fancy Willie!' reiterated Lady Merceron. 'Surely he can't afford to marry? He's in a bank, you know, Vansittart, and he only gets a hundred and twenty pounds a year.'

'One blessing of the country is that everybody knows his neighbour's income,' observed Mr. Vansittart.

'Perhaps the lady has money,' suggested Mrs. Marland. 'But, Mr. Merceron, who's the other lady?'

'A friend of Miss Wallace's, I believe. I don't know her name.'

'Oh, they're merely friends of Prime's?' Mr. Vansittart concluded. 'If that's all he bases his claim for a reduction on——'

'Hang it! He might as well have it,' interrupted Charlie. 'He talks to me about it for half an hour every time we meet.'

'But, my dear Charlie, you have more time than money to waste—at least, so it seems.'

His uncle's sarcasm never affected Charlie's temper.

'I'll turn him on to you, uncle,' he replied, 'and you can see how you like it.'

'I'll go and call on him to-morrow. You'd better come too, Charlie.'

'And then you can see the ladies from London,' added Mrs. Marland. 'Perhaps the one who isn't young Mr. Prime's will be interesting.'

'Or,' said Charlie, 'as mostly happens in this woeful world, the one who is.'

'I think the less we see of that sort of person at all, the better,' observed Lady Merceron, with gentle decision. 'They can hardly be *quite* what we're accustomed to.'

'That sort of person!'

Charlie went to bed with the phrase ringing in his horror-struck ears. If to be the most beautiful, the most charming, and the most refined, the daintiest, the wittiest and prettiest, the kindest and the sweetest, the merriest and most provoking creature in the whole world—if to be all this were yet not to weigh against being 'that sort of person'—if it were not, indeed, to outweigh, banish, and obliterate everything else—why, the world was not fit to live in, and he no true Merceron! For the Merceron men had always pleased themselves.

CHAPTER III.

ALL NONSENSE.

ON the evening of the next day, while the sun was still on the Pool, and its waters, forgetful of darker moods and bygone tragedies, smiled under the tickling of darting golden gleams, a girl sat on the broad lowest step of the temple. She had rolled the sleeves of her white gown above her elbow, up well-nigh to her shoulder, and, the afternoon being sultry, from time to time dipped her arms in the water and, taking them out again, amused herself by watching the bright drops race down to her rosy finger-tips. The sport was good, apparently, for she laughed and flung back her head so that the stray locks of hair might not spoil her sight of it. On either side of this lowest step there was a margin of smooth level grass, and, being unable as she sat to bathe both arms at once, presently she moved on to the grass and lay down, sinking her elbows in the pond and leaning her face over the edge of it. The posture had another advantage she had not thought of, and she laughed again when she saw her own eyes twinkling at her from the depths. As she lay there a longing came upon her.

'If I could be sure he wouldn't come I'd dip my feet,' she murmured.

As, however, he had come every evening for a fortnight past the fancy was not to be indulged, and she consoled herself by a deeper dive yet of her arms and by drooping her head till her nose and the extreme fringe of her eyelashes were wetted, and the stray locks floated on either side.

Presently, as she still looked, she saw another shadow on the water, and exchanged with her image a confidential glance.

'You again?' she asked.

The other shadow nodded.

'Why didn't you come in the canoe?'

'Because people see it.'

It struck her that her attitude was unconventional, and by a lithe complicated movement, whereof Charlie noticed only the elegance and not the details, she swept round and, sitting, looked up at him.

'I know who she was,' she observed.

'She very nearly knew who you were. You oughtn't to have come to the window.'

'She thought I was the ghost.'

'You shouldn't reckon on people being foolish.'

'Shouldn't I? Yet I reckoned on your coming—or there'd have been some more of me in the water.'

'I wish I were an irregular man,' said Charlie.

She was slowly turning down her sleeves, and, ignoring his remark, said, with a question in her tones:

'Nettie Wallace says that Willie Prime says that everybody says that you're going to marry that girl.'

'I believe it's quite true.'

'Oh!' and she looked across the Pool.

'True that everybody says so,' added Charlie. 'Why do you turn down your sleeves?'

'How funny I must have looked, sprawling on the bank like that!' she remarked.

'Awful!' said Charlie, sitting down.

She looked at him with uneasiness in her eye.

'Nothing but an ankle, I swear,' he answered.

She blushed and smiled.

'I think you should whistle, or something, as you come.'

'Not I,' said Charlie, with decision.

Suddenly she turned to him with a serious face, or one that tried to be serious.

'Why do you come?' she asked.

'Why do I eat?' he returned.

'And yet you were angry the first time.'

'Nobody likes to be caught ranting out poetry—especially his own.'

'I believe you were frightened—you thought I was Agatha. The poetry was about her, wasn't it?'

'It's not at all a bad poem,' observed Charlie.

'You remember I liked it so much that I clapped my hands.'

'And I jumped!'

The girl laughed.

'Ah, well,' she said, 'it's time to go home.'

'Oh, dear, no,' said Charlie.

'But I've promised to be early, because Willie Prime's coming, and I'm to be introduced to him.'

'Willie Prime can wait. He's got Miss Wallace to comfort him, and I've got nobody to comfort me.'

'Oh, yes. Miss Bushell.'

'You know her name?'

'Yes—and yours—your surname, I mean; you told me the other.'

'That's more than you've done for me.'

'I told you my name was Agatha.'

'Ah, but that was a joke. I'd been talking about Agatha Merceron.'

'Very well. I'm sorry it doesn't satisfy you. If you won't believe me——!'

'But your surname?'

'Oh, mine? Why, mine's Brown.'

'Brown!' re-echoed Charlie, with a tinge of disappointment in his tone.

'Don't you like it?' asked Miss Agatha Brown with a smile.

'Oh, it will do for the present,' laughed Charlie.

'Well, I don't mean to keep it all my life. I've spent to-day, Mr. Merceron, in spying out your house. Nettie Wallace and I ventured quite near. It's very pretty.'

'Rather dilapidated, I'm afraid.'

'What's the time, Mr. Merceron?'

'Half-past six. Oh, by Jove!'

'Well? Afraid of seeing poor Agatha?'

'I should see nobody but you, if you were here. No. I forgot that. I've got to meet someone at the station at a quarter-past seven.'

'Oh, do tell me who?'

'You'd be none the wiser. It's a Mr. Victor Sutton.'

'Victor Sutton!' she exclaimed, with a glance at Charlie which passed unnoticed by him. 'Is he a friend of yours?'

'I suppose so. Of my family's, anyhow.'

'Good-bye. I'm going,' she announced.

'You'll be here to-morrow?'

'Yes. For the last time.'

She dropped this astounding thunderbolt on Charlie's head as though it had been the most ordinary remark in the world.

'The last time! Oh, Miss——' No: somehow he could not lay his tongue to that 'Miss Brown.'

'I can't spend all my life in Lang Marsh,' said she.

'Agatha,' he burst out.

'No, no. This is not the last time. Sha'n't we keep that?' she asked, with a provokingly light-hearted smile,

'You promise to be here to-morrow?'

'Oh, yes.'

'I shall have something to say to you then,' Charlie announced with a significant air.

'Oh, you never lack conversation.'

'You'll be here at five?'

'Precisely,' she answered with mock gravity; 'and now I'm gone!'

Charlie took off his straw hat, stretched out his right hand, and took hers. For a moment she drew back, but he looked very handsome and gallant as he bowed his head down to her hand, and she checked the movement.

'Oh, well!' she murmured; she was protesting against any importance being attached to the incident.

Charlie, having paid his homage, walked, or rather ran, swiftly away. To begin with, he had none too much time if he was to meet Victor Sutton; secondly, he was full of a big resolve, and that generally makes a man walk fast.

The lady pursued a more leisurely progress. Swinging her hat in her hand, she made her way through the tangled wood back to the high-road, and turned towards Mr. Prime's farm. She went slowly along, thinking perhaps of the attractive young fellow she had left behind her, wondering perhaps why she had promised to meet him again. She did not know why, for there was sure to happen at that last meeting the one thing which she did not, she supposed, wish to happen. However, a promise is a promise. She heard the sound of wheels behind her, and, turning, found the farmer's spring-cart hard on her heels. The farmer was driving, and by his side sat a nice-looking girl dressed in the extreme of fashion. On the back seat was a young man in a very light suit, with a fine check pattern, and a new pair of brown leather shoes. The cart pulled up.

'We can make room for ye, Miss,' said old Mr. Prime.

Nettie Wallace jumped up and stood with her foot on the step. Willie Prime jumped down and effected her transfer to the back seat. Agatha climbed up beside the farmer and stretched her hand back to greet Willie. Willie took it rather timidly. He did not quite 'savvy' (as he expressed it to himself); his *fiancée's* friend was very simply attired, infinitely more simply than Nettie herself. Nettie had told him that her friend was 'off and on' (a vague and rather obscure qualification of the statement) in the same line as herself—namely, Court and high-class dressmaking. Yet there was a difference between Nettie and her friend.

'Anybody else arrived by the train?' asked Agatha.

'A visitor for the Court. A good-looking gentleman, wasn't he, Willie?'

Nettie was an elegant creature and, but for the 'gentleman' and that slight but ineradicable twang that clings like Nessus' shirt to the cockney, all effort and all education notwithstanding (it will even last three generations, and is audible, perhaps, now and then in the House of Lords), her speech was correct and even dainty in its prim nicety.

'Ah!' said Agatha.

'His name's Sutton,' said Willie; 'Mr. Charles—young Mr. Merceron—told me so when he was talking to me on the platform.'

'You know young Mr. Merceron?' asked Agatha.

'Why, they was boys together,' interrupted the old farmer, who made little of the refinements of speech. In his youth no one, from the lord to the labourer, spoke grammar in the country. 'Used to larn to swim together in the Pool, didn't you, Willie?'

'I must have a dip there to-morrow,' cried Willie; and Agatha wondered what time he would choose. 'And I'll take you there, Nettie. Ever been yet?'

'No. They—they say it's haunted, don't they, Willie?'

'That's nonsense,' said Willie. London makes a man sceptical. The old farmer shook his head and grunted doubtfully. His mother had seen poor Agatha Merceron; this was before the farmer was born—a little while before—and the shock had come nigh to being most serious to him. The whole countryside knew it.

'Why do you call it nonsense, Mr. Prime?' asked Agatha.

'Oh, I don't know, Miss——'

'Miss Brown, Willie,' said Nettie.

'Miss Brown. Anyway, we needn't go the time the ghost comes.'

'I should certainly avoid that,' laughed Agatha.

'We'll go in the morning, Nettie, and I'll have my swim in the evening.'

Agatha frowned. It would be particularly inconvenient if Willie Prime took his swim in the evening.

'Oh, don't, Willie,' cried Nettie. 'She—she might do you some harm.'

Willie was hard to persuade. He was not above liking to appear a daredevil; and the discussion was still raging when they

reached the farm. The two girls went upstairs to the little rooms which they occupied. Agatha turned into hers, and Nettie Wallace followed her.

‘Your Willie is very nice,’ said Agatha, sitting on her bed.

Nettie smiled with pleasure.

‘And now that you’ve other company I shall go.’

‘You’re going, Miss?’

‘Not *Miss*.’

Nettie laughed.

‘I forget sometimes,’ she said.

‘Well, you must remember just over to-morrow. I shall go next day. I must meet my grandfather in London.’

Nettie offered no opposition. On the contrary, she appeared rather relieved.

‘Nettie, did you like Mr. Sutton’s looks?’ asked Agatha after a pause.

‘He’s too black and blue for my taste,’ answered Nettie.

Willie Prime was red and yellow.

‘Blue? Oh, you mean his cheeks?’

‘Yes. But he’s a handsome gentleman all the same; and you should have seen his luggage! Such a dressing-bag—cost fifty pounds, I daresay.’

‘Oh, dear, me,’ said Agatha. ‘Yes, Nettie, I shall go the day after to-morrow.’

‘Mr. Merceron asked to be introduced to me,’ said Nettie proudly. ‘And he asked where you were—he said he’d seen you at the window.’

‘Did he?’ said Agatha negligently; and Nettie, finding the conversation flag, retired to her own room.

Agatha sat a moment longer on the bed.

‘What a very deceitful young man,’ she exclaimed at last. ‘I must be a very strict secret indeed. Well, I suppose I should be.’

CHAPTER IV.

A CATASTROPHE AT THE POOL.

MR. VANSITTART MERCERON was not quite sure that Victor Sutton had any business to call him ‘Merceron.’ He was nearly twenty years older than Victor, and a man of considerable position; nor was he, as some middle-aged men are, flattered by the implication

of contemporaneousness carried by the mode of address. But it is hard to give a hint to a man who has no inkling that there is room for one; and when Mr. Vansittart addressed Victor as 'Mr. Sutton' the latter graciously told him to 'hang the Mister.' Reciprocity was inevitable, and the elder man asked himself, with a sardonic grin, how soon he would be 'Van.'

'Coming to bathe, Merceron?' he heard under his window at eight o'clock the next morning. 'We're off to the Pool.'

Mr. Vansittart shouted an emphatic negative, and the two young fellows started off by themselves. Charlie's manner was affected by the ceremonious courtesy which a well-bred host betrays towards a guest not very well-beloved, but Victor did not notice this. It seldom occurred to him that people did not like him.

'Yes,' he was saying, 'I'm just twenty-nine. I've had my fling, Charlie, and now I shall get to business.'

Charlie was relieved to find that according to this reckoning he had several more years' 'fling' before him.

'Next year,' pursued Victor, 'I shall marry; then I shall go into Parliament, and then I shall go ahead.'

'I didn't know you were engaged.'

'No, I'm not, but I'm going to be. I can please myself, you see; I've got lots of coin.'

'Oh, yes, but can you please the lady?' asked Charlie.

'My dear boy,' began Victor, 'when you've seen a little more of the world——'

'Here we are,' said Charlie. 'Why, hullo! Who's that?'

A dripping head and a blowing mouth were visible in the middle of the Pool.

'Willie Prime by Jove! 'Morning, Willie;' and Charlie set about flinging off his flannels, Victor following his example in a more leisurely fashion.

Willie Prime was a little puzzled to know how he ought to treat Charlie. 'Charlie' he had been in very old days—then Master Charlie (that was Willie's mother's doing)—then Mr. Charles. But now Willie had set up for himself. He had played billiards with a lord, and football against the Sybarites, and, incidentally, hobnobbed with quite great people. It is not very easy to assert a social position when one has nothing on, and only one's head out of water, but Willie did it.

'Good-morning—er—Merceron,' said he.

Victor heard him, and put up his eyeglass in amazement; but

he, in his turn, had only a shirt on, and the *hauteur* was a failure. Charlie utterly failed to notice the incident.

'Is it cold?' he shouted.

'Beastly,' answered Willie. The man who has got in always tells the man who is going to get in that it is 'beastly cold.'

'Here goes!' cried Charlie; and a minute later he was treading water by Willie's side.

'Miss Wallace all fit?' he asked.

'Thank you, yes, she's all right.'

'And her friend?'

'All right, I believe.'

'And when is it to be, old fellow?'

'Soon as I get a rise.'

'What?' asked the unsophisticated Charlie, who knew the phrase chiefly in connection with fish.

'A rise of screw, you know.'

'Oh, ah, yes—what a fool I am!' and Charlie disappeared beneath the waves.

When they were all on the bank, drying, Willie, encouraged by not being discouraged (save by Sutton's silence) in his advances, ventured further, and asked in a joking tone:

'And aren't you marked off yet? We've been expecting to hear of it for the last twelve months.'

'What do you mean?'

'Why, you and Miss Bushell.'

Charlie struggled through his shirt, and then answered, with his first touch of distance:

'Nothing in it. People've got no business to gossip.'

'It's damned impertinent,' observed Victor Sutton in slow and deliberate tones.

Willie flushed.

'I beg pardon,' he said gruffly. 'I only repeated what I heard.'

'My dear fellow, no harm's done,' cried Charlie. 'Who was the fool?'

'Well—in fact—my father.'

The situation was awkward, but they wisely eluded it by laughter. But a thought struck Charlie.

'I say, did your father state it as a fact?'

'Oh no; but as a certainty, you know.'

'When?'

'Last night at supper.'

Charlie's brow clouded. Miss B—— that is, Agatha, was certain to have been at supper. However, all that could be put right in the evening—that one blessed evening left to him. He looked at Willie and opened his mouth to speak; but he shut it again. It did not seem to him that he could question Willie Prime about the lady. She had chosen to tell him nothing, and her will was his law. But he was yearning to know what she was and how she came there. He refrained; and this time virtue really had a reward beyond itself, for Willie would blithely have told him that she was a dressmaker (he called Nettie, however, the manager of a Court *modiste's* business), and that would not have pleased Charlie.

It was all very well for Charlie to count on that blessed evening; but he reckoned without his host—or rather without his guests.

The Bushells came to lunch, Millie driving her terrified mother in a lofty gig; and at lunch Millie recounted her vision of Agatha Merceron. She did not believe it, of course; but it was queer, wasn't it? Victor Sutton rose to the bait at once.

'We'll investigate it,' he cried. 'Merceron' (he meant the patient Mr. Vansittart), 'didn't you once write an article on "Apparitions" for *Intellect*?'

'Yes, I proved there were none,' answered Mr. Vansittart.

'That's impossible, you know,' remarked Mrs. Marland gently.

'We'll put you to the proof this very evening,' declared Mr. Sutton.

Charlie started.

'Are you game, Miss Bushell?' continued Victor.

'Ye—yes, if you'll keep quite near me,' answered Millie, with a playful shudder. Charlie reflected how ill playfulness became her, and frowned. But Millie was pleased to see him frown; she enjoyed showing him that other men liked to keep quite near to her.

'Then this evening we'll go in a body to the Pool.'

'I shall not go,' shuddered Mrs. Marland.

'An hour after sunset!'

'Half an hour. She might be early—and we'll stay half an hour after. We'll give her a fair show.'

'Come,' thought Charlie. 'I shall get an hour with Agatha.'

'You'll come, Charlie?' asked Victor.

'Oh, all right,' he answered, hiding all signs of vexation. He could get back by six and join the party. But why was Mrs. Marland looking at him?

The first step, however, towards getting back is to get there, and Charlie found this none so easy. After lunch came lawn-tennis, and he was impressed. Mr. Vansittart played a middle-aged game, and Victor had found little leisure for this modest sport among his more ambitious amusements. Charlie had to balance Millie Bushell, and he spent a very hot and wearying afternoon. They would go on: Victor declared it was good for him, Uncle Van delighted in a hard game (it appeared to be a very hard game to him from the number of strokes he missed), and Millie grew in vigour, ubiquity, and (it must be added) intensity of colour as the hours wore away. It was close on five before Charlie, with a groan, could throw down his racquet.

'Poor boy!' said Mrs. Marland.

'Charlie, dear,' called Lady Mercer, who had been talking comfortably to Mrs. Bushell in the shade, 'come and hand the tea. I'm sure you must all want some. Millie, my dear, how hot you look!'

'She never will take any care of her complexion,' complained Mrs. Bushell.

'Take care of your stom—your health—and your complexion will take care of itself,' observed Mr. Vansittart.

'Charlie! Where is the boy?' called Lady Mercer again.

The boy was gone. He was flying as fast as his legs would take him to the Pool. Where was that cherished interview now? He could hope only for a few wretched minutes—hardly enough to say good-bye once—before he must hustle—yes, positively hustle—Agatha out of sight. He had heard that abominable Sutton remark that they might as well start directly after tea.

He was breathless when he burst through the willows. But there he came to a sudden, a dead stop, and then drew back into shelter again. There on the bank, scarcely a dozen feet from it, sat two people—a young man with his arm round a young woman's waist. Willie Prime and Nettie Wallace, 'by all that's damnable!' as Sir Peter says! Charlie said something quite as forcible.

He felt for his watch, but he had left it with his waistcoat on the lawn. What was the time? Was it going quickly or slowly? Could he afford to wait, or must he run round to the road and intercept Agatha? Five minutes passed in vacillation.

'I'll go and stop her,' he said, and began a cautious retreat. As he moved he heard Willie's voice.

'Well, my dear, let's be off,' said Willie.

Nettie rose with a sigh of content, adjusted her hat coquettishly, and smoothed her skirts.

'I'm ready, Willie. It's been beautiful, hasn't it?'

They came towards Charlie. Evidently they intended to regain the road by the same path as he had chosen. Indeed, from that side of the Pool there was no choice, unless one clambered round by the muddy bank.

'We must make haste,' said Willie. 'Father'll want his tea.'

If they made haste they would be close on his heels. Charlie shrank back behind a willow and let them go by; then, quick as thought, rushed to his canoe and paddled across—up the steps and into the temple he rushed. She wasn't there! Fate is too hard for the best of us sometimes. Charlie sat down and, stretching out his legs, stared gloomily at his toes.

Thus he must have sat nearly ten minutes, when a head was put round the Corinthian pilaster of the doorway.

'Poor boy! Am I very late?'

Charlie leapt up and forward, breathlessly blurting out joy tempered by uneasiness. Agatha gathered the difficulty of the position.

'Well,' said she, smiling, 'I must disappear, and you must go back to your friends.'

'No,' said Charlie. 'I must talk to you.'

'But they may come any moment.'

'I don't care!'

'Oh, but I do. Charlie, what's the matter? Oh, didn't I ever call you "Charlie" before? Well, Charlie, if you love me (yes, I know!) you'll not let these people see me.'

'All right! Come along. I'll take you to the road and come back. Hullo! What's that?'

'It's them!' exclaimed the lady.

It was. The pair dived back into the temple. On the opposite bank stood Millie Bushell, Mr. Vansittart, and Victor Sutton.

'Hullo, there, Charlie, you thief!' cried Victor. 'Bring that canoe over here. Miss Bushell wants to get to the temple.'

'Hush! Don't move!' whispered Agatha.

'But they know I'm here; they see that confounded canoe.'

'Charlie! Charlie!' was shouted across in three voices.

'What the devil——,' muttered Charlie.

'They mustn't see me,' urged Agatha.

Victor Sutton's voice rose clear and distinct.

'I'll unearth him!' he cried. 'I know the way round. You wait here with Miss Bushell, Merceron.'

'Oh, he's coming round!'

'I must chance it,' said Charlie, and he came out of hiding. A cry greeted him. Victor was already started, but stopped. Charlie embarked and shot across.

'You villain! You gave us the slip,' cried Uncle Van.

Miss Bushell began quietly to embark. Uncle Van followed her example.

'Oh, Mr. Merceron, you'll sink us!' cried Millie.

Charlie sat glum and silent. The situation beat him completely.

Uncle Van drew back. Millie seized the paddle and propelled the canoe out from the bank.

'You come round with me, Merceron,' called Sutton, and the two men turned to the path. 'No,' added Victor. 'Look here, we can climb round here,' and he pointed to the bank. There was a little narrow muddy track, but it was enough.

The canoe was halfway across; the two men—Victor leading at a good pace—were halfway round. Charlie glanced at the window of the temple and caught a fleeting glance of a despairing face. 'If you love me, they mustn't see me!'

'Here, give me the paddle!' he exclaimed, and reached forward for it.

'No, I can do it,' answered Millie, lifting the instrument out of his reach.

Charlie stepped forward—rather, he jumped forward, as a man jumps over a ditch. There was a shriek from Millie; the canoe swayed, tottered, and upset. In a confused mass, Millie Bushell and Charlie were hurled into the water. Victor and Uncle Van, hardly five yards from the steps, turned in amazement.

'Help! help!' screamed Millie.

'Help!' echoed Charlie. 'I can't hold her up. Victor, come and help me! Uncle Van, come along!'

'The devil!' murmured Uncle Van.

'Quick, quick!' called Charlie; and Victor, with a vexed laugh, peeled off his coat and jumped in. Mr. Vansittart stood with a puzzled air. Then a happy thought struck him. He turned and trotted back the way he had come. He would get a rope!

As he went, as Victor reached the strugglers in the water, a slim figure in white, with a smile on her face, stole cautiously from the temple and disappeared in the wood behind. Charlie

saw her go, but he held poor Millie's head remorselessly tight towards the other bank.

And that was the last he saw of the Lady of the Pool.

Millie Bushell landed, her dripping clothes clinging round her. Victor was shivering, for the evening had turned chilly. Uncle Van had a bit of rope from the boat-shed in his hand, and a doubtful smile on his face.

'We'd best get Miss Bushell home,' he suggested, and they started in gloomy procession. Charlie, in remorse, gave Millie his arm.

'Oh, how could you?' she murmured piteously. She was cold, she was wet, and she was sure that she looked frightful.

'I—I didn't do it on purpose,' Charlie blurted out eagerly.

'On purpose! Well, I suppose not,' she exclaimed, bewildered.

Charlie flushed. Victor shot a swift glance at him.

Halfway home they met Mrs. Marland, and the whole affair had to be explained to her. Charlie essayed the task.

'Still, I don't see how you managed to upset the canoe,' observed Mrs. Marland.

'No more do I,' said Victor Sutton.

Charlie gave it up.

'I'm so sorry, Millie,' he whispered. 'You must try to forgive me.'

So, once again, the coast was left clear for Agatha Merceron, if she came that night. But, whether she did or not, the other Agatha came no more, and Charlie's great resolve went unfulfilled. Yet the next evening he went alone to the temple, and he found, lying on the floor, a little handkerchief trimmed with lace and embroidered with the name of 'Agatha.' This he put in his pocket, thanking Heaven that his desperate manœuvre had kept the shrine inviolate the day before.

'Poor Millie!' said he. 'But then I had to do it.'

'I hear,' remarked Lady Merceron a few days later, 'that one of Mr. Prime's friends has left him—not Willie's young lady—the other.'

'Has she?' asked Charlie.

No one pursued the subject, and, after a moment's pause, Mrs. Marland, who was sitting next Charlie, asked him in a low voice whether he had been to the Pool that evening.

'No,' answered Charlie. 'I don't go every night.'

'Oh, poor dear Miss Bushell!' laughed Mrs. Marland; and, when Charlie looked inquiringly at her, she shook her head.

'You see, I know something of young men,' she explained.

CHAPTER V.

AN UNFORESEEN CASE.

'I WISH to goodness,' remarked the Reverend Sigismund Taylor, rubbing the bridge of his nose with a corner of the Manual, 'that the Vicar had never introduced auricular confession. It may be in accordance with the practice of the Primitive Church, but—one does meet with such very curious cases. There's nothing the least like it in the Manual.'

He opened the book and searched its pages over again. No, the case had not been foreseen. It must be included in those which were 'left to the discretion of the priest.'

'It's a poor Manual,' said Mr. Taylor, throwing it down and putting his hands in the pocket of his cassock. 'Poor girl! She was quite distressed, too. I must have something to tell her when she comes next week.'

Mr. Taylor had, in face of the difficulty, taken time to consider, and the penitent had gone away in suspense. To represent oneself as a dressmaker—well, there was nothing very outrageous in that; it was unbecoming, but venial, to tell sundry fibs by way of supporting the assumed character—the Manual was equal to that; but the rest of the disclosure was the *crux*. Wrong, no doubt, was the conduct—but how wrong? That made all the difference. And then there followed another question: What ought to be done? She had asked for advice about that also, and, although such counsel was not strictly incumbent on him, he felt that he ought not to refuse it. Altogether he was puzzled. At eight-and-twenty one cannot be ready for everything; yet she had implored him to consult nobody else, and decide for her himself. 'I've such trust in you,' she had said, wiping away an incipient teardrop; and, although Mr. Taylor told her that the individual was nothing and the Office everything, he had been rather gratified. Thinking that a turn in the open air might clear his brain and enable him better to grapple with this very thorny question, he changed his cassock for a long-tailed coat, put on his wide-

awake, and, leaving the precincts of St. Edward Confessor, struck across Park Lane and along the Row. He passed several people he knew, both men and women: Mrs. Marland was there, attended by two young men, and, a little farther on, he saw old Lord Thrapston tottering along on his stick. Lord Thrapston hated a parson, and scowled at poor Mr. Taylor as he went by. Mr. Taylor shrank from meeting his eye, and hurried along till he reached the Serpentine, where he stood still for a few minutes, drinking in the fresh breeze. But the breeze could not blow his puzzle out of his brain. Was it a crime, or merely an escapade? What had she said to the young man? What had her feelings been or become towards the young man? Moreover, what had she caused the young man's feelings to be for her? When he came to think it over, Mr. Taylor discovered, with a shock of surprise, that on all these distinctly material points the confession had been singularly incomplete. He was ashamed of this, for, of course, it was his business to make the confession full and exhaustive. He could only plead that, at the moment, it had seemed thorough and candid—an unreserved revelation. Yet those points did, as a fact, remain obscure.

'I wish I knew a little more about human nature,' sighed Mr. Taylor: he was thinking of one division of human nature, and it is likely enough that he knew next to nothing of it.

A hand clapped him on the shoulder, and, with a start, he turned round. A tall young man, in a new frock-coat and a faultless hat, stood by him, smiling at him.

'What, Charlie, old fellow!' cried Taylor; 'where do you spring from?'

Charlie explained that he was up in town for a month or two.

'It's splendid to meet you first day! I was going to look you up,' he said.

Sigismund Taylor and Charlie had been intimate friends at Oxford, although Charlie was, as time counts there, very considerably the junior. For the last two or three years they had hardly met.

'But what are you up for?'

'Oh, well, you see, my uncle wants me to get called to the Bar, or something, so I ran up to have a look into it.'

'Will that take a month?'

'Look here, old fellow, I've got nothing else to do—I don't see why I shouldn't stretch it to three months. Besides, I want to spend some time with my ancestors.'

'With your ancestors?'

'In the British Museum: I'm writing a book about them. Queer lot some of them were, too. Of course I'm specially interested in Agatha Merceron; but I suppose you never heard of her.'

Mr. Taylor confessed his ignorance, and Charlie, taking his arm, walked him up and down the bank, while he talked on his pet subject. Agatha Merceron was always interesting, and just now anything about the Pool was interesting; for there was one reason for his visit to London which he had not disclosed. Nettie Wallace had, when he met her one day, incautiously dropped a word which seemed to imply that the other Agatha was often in London. Nettie tried to recall her words; but the mischief was done, and Charlie became more than ever convinced that he would grow rusty if he stayed always at Langbury Court. In fact, he could suffer it no longer, and to town he went.

For a long while Sigismund Taylor listened with no more than average interest to Charlie's story, but it chanced that one word caught his notice.

'She comes out of the temple,' said Charlie, in the voice of hushed reverence with which he was wont to talk of the unhappy lady.

'Out of where?' asked Mr. Taylor.

'The temple. Oh, I forgot. The temple is—' and Charlie gave a description which need not be repeated.

Temple! temple! Where had he heard of a temple lately? Mr. Taylor cudgelled his brains. Why—why—yes, she had spoken of a temple. She said they met in a temple. It was a strange coincidence: the word had struck him at the time. But then everybody knows that, at a certain period, it was common enough to put up these little classical erections as a memorial or merely as an ornament to pleasure-grounds. It must be a mere coincidence. But—— Mr. Taylor stopped short.

'What's up?' asked Charlie, who had finished his narrative, and was now studying the faces of the ladies who rode past.

'Nothing,' answered Mr. Taylor.

And really it was not much—taken by itself, entirely unworthy of notice; even taken in conjunction with the temple, of no real significance, that he could see. Still, it was a whimsical thing that, as had just struck him, Charlie's spectre should be named Agatha. But it came to nothing: how could the name of Charlie's spectre have anything to do with that of his penitent?

Presently Charlie, too, fell into silence. He beat his stick moodily against his leg and looked glum and absent.

'Ah, well,' he said at last, 'poor Agatha was hardly used : she paid part of the debt we owe woman.'

Mr. Taylor raised his brows and smiled at this gloomily misogynistic sentiment. He had the perception to grasp in a moment what it indicated. His young friend was, or had lately been, or thought he was likely to be, a lover, and an unhappy one. But he did not press Charlie. Confessions were no luxury to him.

Presently they began to walk back, and Charlie, saying he had to dine with Victor Sutton, made an appointment to see Taylor again, and left him, striking across the Row. Taylor strolled on, and, finding Mrs. Marland still in her seat, sat down by her. She was surprised and pleased to hear that Charlie was in town.

'I left him at home in deep dumps. You've never been to Langbury Court, have you?'

Taylor shook his head.

'Such a sweet old place! But, of course, rather dull for a young man, with nobody but his mother and just one or two slow country neighbours.'

'Oh, a run 'll do him good.'

'Yes; he was quite moped;,' and Mrs. Marland glanced at her companion. She wanted only a very little encouragement to impart her suspicions to him. It must, in justice to Mrs. Marland, be remembered that she had always found the simplest explanation of Charlie's devotion to the Pool hard to accept, and the most elaborate demonstration of how a Canadian canoe may be upset unconvincing.

'You're a great friend of his, aren't you?' pursued Mrs. Marland. 'So I suppose there's no harm in mentioning my suspicions to you. Indeed, I daresay you could be of use to him—I mean, persuade him to be wise. I'm afraid, Mr. Taylor, that he is in some entanglement.'

'Dear, dear!' murmured Mr. Taylor.

'Oh, I've no positive proof, but I fear so—and a very undesirable entanglement, too, with someone quite beneath him. Yes, I think I had better tell you about it.'

Mr. Taylor sat silent and, save for a start or two, motionless while his companion detailed her circumstantial evidence. Whether it was enough to prove Mrs. Marland's case or not—

whether, that is, it is inconceivable that a young man should go to any place fourteen evenings running, and upset a friend of his youth out of a canoe, except there be a lady involved, is perhaps doubtful; but it was more than enough to show Mr. Sigismund Taylor that the confession he had listened to was based upon fact, and that Charlie Merceron was the other party to those stolen interviews, into whose exact degree of heinousness he was now inquiring. This knowledge caused Mr. Taylor to feel that he was in an awkward position.

'Now,' asked Mrs. Marland, 'candidly, Mr. Taylor, can you suppose anything else than that our friend Charlie was carrying on a very pronounced flirtation with this dressmaker?'

'Dressmaker?'

'Her friend was, and I believe she was too. Something of the kind, anyhow.'

'You—you never saw the—the other person?'

'No; she kept out of the way. That looks bad, doesn't it? No doubt she was a tawdry vulgar creature. But a man never notices that!'

At this moment two people were seen approaching. One of them was a man of middle height and perhaps five-and-thirty years of age; he was stout and thick-built; he had a fat face with bulging cheeks; his eyes were rather like a frog's; he leant very much forward as he walked, and swayed gently from side to side with a rolling swagger; and as his body rolled, his eye rolled too, and he looked this way and that with a jovial leer and a smile of contentment and amusement on his face. The smile and the merry eye redeemed his appearance from blank ugliness, but neither of them indicated a spiritual or exalted mind.

By his side walked a girl, dressed, as Mrs. Marland enviously admitted, as really very few women in London could dress, and wearing, in virtue perhaps of the dress, perhaps of other more precious gifts, an air of assured perfection and dainty disdain. She was listening to her companion's conversation, and did not notice Sigismund Taylor, with whom she was well acquainted.

'Dear me, who are those, I wonder?' exclaimed Mrs. Marland. 'She's very *distinguée*.'

'It's Miss Glyn,' answered he.

'What?—Miss Agatha Glyn?'

'Yes,' he replied, wondering whether that little coincidence as to the 'Agatha' would suggest itself to anyone else.

'Lord Thrapston's granddaughter?'

'Yes.'

'Horrid old man, isn't he?'

'I know him very slightly.'

'And the man—who's he?'

'Mr. Calder Wentworth.'

'To be sure. Why, they're engaged, aren't they? I saw it in the paper.'

'I'm sure I don't know,' said Mr. Taylor, in a voice more troubled than the matter seemed to require. 'I saw it in the paper too.'

'He's no beauty, at any rate; but he's a great match, I suppose?'

'Oh, perhaps it isn't true.'

'You speak as if you wished it wasn't. I've heard about Mr. Wentworth from Victor Sutton—you know who I mean?' and Mrs. Marland proceeded to give some particulars of Calder Wentworth's career.

Meanwhile that gentleman himself was telling Agatha Glyn a very humorous story. Agatha did not laugh. Suddenly she interrupted him.

'Why don't you ask me more about it?'

'I thought you'd tell me if you wanted me to know,' he answered.

'You are the most insufferable man. Don't you care in the least what I do or where I go?'

'Got perfect confidence in you,' said Calder politely.

'I don't deserve it.'

'Oh, I daresay not; but it's so much more comfortable for me.'

'I disappeared—simply disappeared—for a fortnight; and you've never asked where I went, or what I did, or—or anything.'

'Haven't I? Where did you go?'

'I can't tell you.'

'There, you see! What the dickens was the good of my asking?'

'If you knew what I did I suppose you'd never speak to me again.'

'All right. Keep it dark then, please.'

'For one thing, I met— No, I won't.'

'I never asked you to, you know.'

They walked on a little way in silence.

'Met young Sutton at lunch,' observed Calder. 'He's been

rusticating with some relations of old Van Merceron's. They've got a nice place apparently.'

'I particularly dislike Mr. Sutton.'

'All right. He sha'n't come when we're married. Eh? What?'

'I didn't speak,' said Miss Glyn, who had certainly done something.

'Beg pardon,' smiled Calder. 'Victor told me rather a joke. It appears there's a young Merceron, and the usual rustic beauty, don't you know—forget the name—but a fat girl, Victor said, and awfully gone on young Merceron. Well, there's a pond or something——'

'How long will *this* story last?' asked Miss Glyn with a tragic air.

'It's an uncommon amusing one,' protested Calder. 'He upset her in the pond, and——'

'Do you mind finishing it some other time?'

'Oh, all right. Thought it 'd interest you.'

'It doesn't.'

'Never knew such a girl! No sense of humour!' commented Calder, with a shake of his head and a backward roll of his eye towards his companion.

But it makes such a difference whether a story is new to the hearer.

(To be continued.)

At the Sign of the Ship.

IN a recent number I confessed that I had mislaid some notes, sent to me by the kindness of Mr. Stephen Ponder, on fire-walking in India. Mr. Ponder has been at the trouble of copying his letter out again, and I give it here, in the hope that other travellers may send in records of similar curious performances. It will be remembered that Mr. Basil Thomson, in his *South Sea Yarns*, gives a description of a Fijian ceremony similar to that here reported from Southern India. He photographed the scene, but the amount of steam and smoke prevented the photograph from being very satisfactory. In the cases attested by Mr. Thomson and Mr. Ponder the fire-walkers do not seem to have been in an ecstatic condition, like the medicine-men and 'mediums' described by old travellers in Northern Asia and North America, or, in England, by Mr. Crookes and others. The rite more exactly corresponds to that spoken of by Virgil. It seems to myself that here we have to do with some actual physical fact, which deserves to be examined by anthropologists, missionaries, and travellers, bearing, as it does, on the old ordeals by fire, as practised in early England. The curious thing is that a proceeding which seems to be so widely diffused, and ancient, has not hitherto been examined by the learned.

Here follows Mr. Ponder's letter.

* * *

'Dear Sir,—Observing from your note in LONGMAN'S MAGAZINE that you have mislaid my notes *re* fire-walking, I herewith repeat them. I have more than once seen it done by the "Klings," as the low-caste Tamil-speaking Hindus from Malabar are called, in the Straits Settlements. On one occasion I was present at a "fire-walking" held in a large tapioca plantation in Province Wellesley, before many hundreds of spectators, all the Hindu coolies from the surrounding estates being mustered. A trench

had been dug about twenty yards long by six feet wide and two deep. This was piled with faggots and small wood four or five feet high. This was lighted at midday, and by four P.M. the trench was a bed of red-hot ashes, the heat from which was so intense that the men who raked and levelled it with long poles could not stand it for more than a minute at a time. A few yards from the end of the trench a large hole had been dug and filled with water. When all was ready, six men, ordinary coolies, dressed only in their "dholis," or loin-cloths, stepped out of the crowd, and, amidst tremendous excitement and a horrible noise of conches and drums, passed over the burning trench from end to end, in single file, at a quick walk, plunging one after the other into the water. Not one of them showed the least sign of injury. They had undergone some course of preparation by their priest, not a Brahman, but some kind of devil-doctor or medicine-man, and, as I understood it, they took on themselves and expiated the sins of the Kling community for the past year (a big job, if thieving and lying count; probably not). They are not, however, always so lucky, for I heard that on the next occasion one of the men fell and was terribly burnt, thus destroying the whole effect of the ceremony. I do not think this to be any part of the Brahmanical religion, though the ordeal by fire as a test of guilt is, or was, in use all over India. The fact is that the races of Southern India, where the Aryan element is very small, have kept all their savage customs and devil-worship under the form of Brahmanism.

'Another curious feat I saw performed at Labuan Deli, in Sumatra, on the Chinese New Year. A Chinaman of the coolie class was squatted stark naked on the roadside, holding on his knees a brass pan the size of a washhand basin, piled a foot high with red-hot charcoal. The heat reached one's face at two yards, but if it had been a tray of ices the man couldn't have been more unconcerned. There was a crowd of Chinese round him, all eagerly asking questions, and a pile of coppers accumulating beside him. A Chinese shopkeeper told me that the man "told fortunes," but from the circumstance of a gambling-house being close by, I concluded that his customers were getting tips on a system.

'Hoping these notes may be of service to you, I remain,

'Yours truly,

'STEPHEN PONDER.'

* * *

Probably the most singular instance of this 'fire-trick' is that attributed to Bernadette, the *voyante* of Lourdes. In a reply to M. Zola's novel, Monseigneur Ricard tells the tale; see *La Vraie Bernadette* (p. 106). He quotes Dr. Boissier's book (pp. 45, 57). Bernadette, on the day of the last but one of her interviews with Our Lady of Lourdes, was in ecstatic prayer before a crowd of lookers-on. She had brought a lighted candle; over the flame she crossed her hands: 'the candle burned, the flame showed its point between her fingers, but did not seem to affect those fingers which it touched.' Dr. Dozuns, astonished by what he saw, forbade the crowd to interrupt, and, taking out his watch, studied the phenomenon for a quarter of an hour. 'Her prayer ended, Bernadette arose; I stopped her, and asked her to show me her hand, which I examined carefully. I could find not the slightest trace of burning. Then I tried the experiment of suddenly placing the flame of the candle under her hand. She snatched it away, and said, "You are burning me."' Dr. Diday explains that, in certain conditions, patients are insensible to pain. The obvious answer is that, even if they do not feel the flame, their flesh is scorched; the lesion is not to be confounded with the sensation which it produces. Here, of course, granting the facts, we must take them with other facts already given, and at least as well attested by evidence as 'the Miracle of the Candle.' The phenomenon, if real, is *not* 'miraculous,' and has occurred, if at all, to every kind of pagan, in every sort of country. Of course you may hold your hands very near indeed to a lighted candle, and only warm them. Dr. Dozuns ought to be very certain that the flame actually touched the fingers.

* * *

An accomplished scholar provides the following classical references to fire-walking in ancient times, exclusive of what we learn from Iamblichus. There is Virgil, *Æneid* xi. 785-8. There is Silvius Italicus, v. 175, and Servius, who says that the Hirpini did the trick by aid of a *medicamentum*—or drug, I suppose; thus the performer *accensis gaudet acervis*. Does not all this throw some light on the old Canaanite custom of 'passing through the fire to Moloch,' which may not have been so bad as it sounds, and on the leaping through the embers on St. John's Day, and the *jour des brandons*?

* * *

Beasts, I am inclined to think, are still, more or less, in the state of paradise and peace. I have been lately honoured by the

acquaintance of a cat which lives on friendly and playful terms with a mouse, *not* a tame pet mouse. They frolic together, and then the mouse returns to its hole. Again, a friend of mine who had several dogs, two young dandies and an old Skye, lately went out to the edge of a wood near his house, where he saw his dogs playing with a fox. They sported together playfully, till the old Skye got wind of the fox, and then 'went for him,' with a yowl, whereon the poor fox fled. The young dogs seemed to cherish no unfriendly feelings till the veteran set a bad example. Dogs and cats are not *natural* enemies; it is we who have corrupted them, and 'a cat and dog life' is, even still, often of good example to married people.

* * *

It is a long time now since Mr. Gosse and I first twangled on the jew's harp of the *ballade* and the trivial *triolet*. He has not deserted the Muse, and now, in his *Russet and Silver* (Heinemann), gives us his best poems, I think, or those which I like best, at all events. The verses to 'Tusitala' (the Samoan name of Mr. Stevenson) are beautiful and original, and, one fears,

That low rim of long faint islands,
Barren granite-snouted nesses,

must strike something of a pang into the heart of the exile in his 'ethereal musky highlands.' The heather smells sweeter than the hibiscus probably, not that I have any practical knowledge of the hibiscus. 'I grow old,' says Mr. Gosse. Bosh! Not so old as that either. We should never grow old; it is only a bad, lazy habit, bred of town life. While there are links, while there is Lord's, while there are salmon in the streams, there is no sort of use in growing old, and the better part of youth is always present.

prepare
To love earth less, and more haunt air,

says the philosophic minstrel. If 'air' means tales and poems of what never was or will be, we have haunted it all the time, and 'the crescent flesh' is *not* 'wound in soft unseemly folds around' persons who keep in the open air. Mr. Gosse 'asks no longer to enjoy, but, ah! to muse and feel.' To feel the first long drag of a fish is to enjoy, however old we are, and Mr. Bright, in his latest days, used to call up the phantom pleasure with a walking-stick for a fishing-rod, so I have been told. But this is a moral

philosophy of the fountain of youth, as it may be found where rivers run, and not in Pall Mall. Mr. Gosse's verses are not all, or nearly all, in the vein of resignation; they are musical, exquisitely coloured, and not wholly, perhaps, without a pleasant reminiscence of Mr. Matthew Arnold. Of them all, perhaps, *The Wall-paper* is my own favourite. *In Poet's Corner* is a late, but not belated, tribute to the Laureate, not written in the din of competitive ready-made odes two years ago.

* * *

Mr. Gosse's poems, in red and gold, are easily to be seen and acquired of men. It is different with Mr. Hosken's *A Monk's Love*. Mr. Hosken, when a rural postman, wrote verses which attracted favourable notice. His new book must be purchased from himself, at 29 Denmark Road, Ealing. The Muse has not a very good chance of being remarked, even with all advantages of publication. While Mr. Hosken's verse is not always very carefully fashioned, while his rhymes now and then lack richness, variety and accuracy, one remains with the distinct impression that what we call *poetry* is here, not always completely and clearly disengaged, but still it is present. Thus the poems are at the opposite pole from the many which are accomplished, elegant, trimmed, and yet lack 'that,' as Sir Joshua Reynolds said of the picture, snapping his fingers to indicate the indefinable. For this reason one ventures to point out the existence of a little book which is unadvertised, 'fugitive and cloistered.'

* * *

He has got his head into the Memorial again—another poem, by Mr. Nimmo Christie, on a rather equivocal hero. The authority is Bishop Forbes's MS. *Lyon in Mourning*, and the song has accidentally been delayed, for it was accepted long ago. The cattle-lifting may be regarded as in the nature of reprisals. Who stole the poor lady's tea, and she a Whig too? The Duke of Cumberland. Who said 'it was excellent tea'? General Wolfe, then a major.

A ROYAL REIVER.

I'll tell ye o' a reiver,
A rantin' wanton reiver,
A dauntless Highland reiver
As ever stood in shoon.

His hand was o' the fairest,
His smile was o' the rarest,
His fate it was the sairest
 Wha should hae worn a croon.

In mirky caverns lyin',
Nor dule was his nor sighin',
Though Geordie's men were spyin'
 To north an' south an' west.
Though we were wae an' eerie,
Although our hearts were wearie,
Our Charlie ay was cheerie,
 The bravest an' the best.

He took wi' happy bearin'
His puir an' modest sharin'
O' meal—our scanty farin'—
 Till every grain was gane.
O then we supped on sorrow,
We could nor buy nor borrow,
But Charlie laughed, 'To-morrow
 We'll give good-bye to pain.'

Hid 'mong the purple heather,
In misty mornin' weather,
Red-coats an' kye together,
 We saw like ghosts gae by.
The beef was young an' dainty,
The sojers ane an' twenty;
'We're five,' said Charlie; 'plenty,
 My lads, to lift the kye.'

So when the skies were weepin',
An' horse an' men were sleepin',
Through whins an' bracken creepin',
 We forced our stealthy way.
We feasted at the daw'in',
An' stayed our hunger gnawin',
Nor ever paid the lawin'
 For stirkies led astray!

AT THE SIGN OF THE SHIP.

There ne'er was Prince like Charlie;
 Our hearts were wi' him fairly.
 O wae's me late an' airly!

He lost his land an' croon.

We loved our royal reiver,
 Our rantin' wanton reiver—
 As bold a Highland reiver

As ever stepped in shoon.

NIMMO CHRISTIE.

* * *

The following review, perhaps, may count among the curiosities of criticism. It is from the *Spectator*, which thus notices, in October, a book published in April, and at present in its fortieth thousand, there or thereabouts—Mr. Crockett's *The Raiders*:¹ 'This is also a Scottish tale, not from Fifeshire, but from the Western Coast. We are bound to say we have found it a little long; graphic as they are, *the descriptions in particular are drawn a little too much, in our judgment*; but there is no lack of force and freshness in it, while both the hero, who tells the story, and "May Mischief," who may be called the heroine, are individualised with a good deal of power.' The style is curious. How can descriptions 'be drawn a little too much'? Mystery! The novel has given a good deal of pleasure, and has flooded Galloway with pilgrims, but, if all critics were as dilatory and as laconic as the *Spectator*, what chance would any new book have? Poor authors would perish of inanition, and expire in a conspiracy of silence, and even the public, apparently, would be sufferers.

* * *

Here I had actual prepared an account of the most ludicrous case of diabolical possession ever printed. But, after all the fire-walking (I anticipate the remark 'Walker!'), even a funny psychical story may seem too much of a good thing. So it must wait its turn, and the dejected angler may have his chance.

* * *

Next to actually fishing, the best thing is a conversation with Mr. Anderson, who vends rods, flies, bats, golf-clubs, and so forth in Princes Street, Edinburgh. Mr. Anderson has a capital tale

¹ T. Fisher Unwin.

of a pool, on Tay, I think, a pool of 'gleaming waters in a granite pass.' The cliffs are perpendicular inaccessible walls, the water flows in a smooth clear shoot, and is full of salmon, which nobody could get at. But someone observed a regular track leading to the pass; it was plain that human steps often went thither, obviously not for purposes of poetic contemplation merely. Yet the face of the rock wall seemed only capable of being trodden by a fly. A watch was set, and an elderly sportsman was found clinging perilously to the rock; not gathering samphire is a more dreadful trade. Being detected, he made a clean breast of it. He could just find a dangerous foothold above the sheer destruction of the torrent. Hence he let his fly down, let it out from the reel gingerly, and 'gruppit them.' How he gaffed them I don't know now. The discoverers roped themselves as for Alpine climbing, and made the experiment. They saw the salmon, one after another, come at the fly, but miss, as it swept too rapidly over them. They applied to the old wise mentor, who said that his experience had been the same. But his ingenuity did not fail him. He put a leaden weight on his casting line, the fly sank, and swam slow, then he 'gruppit them.' The same artful old bird, when there was no fly on the waters, used to begin on a stream at a bend, below a thicket. Above, and round the corner, he set a boy to shake the alders and reeds. The flies dropped out in legions, and he profited, down below, by the consequent excitement of the trout. These are wrinkles worth remembering, if an opportunity occurs.

* * *

This autumn opportunities have been rare. From August 25 to October 15 I suppose that scarce a quarter of an inch of rain fell in Scotland. Sitting by a tomb of Covenanters, above a pool, I heard an old man tell some girls that old men had told *him* how, one year, the pool only escaped by one of its two exits. This year the exit was still occupied by fluid, but scarcely by a stream. The other year was probably 1826, the 'year of the short corn,' which was plucked, not reaped. It is said that the Tay has been even lower than in that summer. When rain did come, in mid-October, the rivers seem to have kept red and high, so that anglers were none the better. November fishing is usually but dowdy sport: salmon are red and parturient and sluggish. So I suppose it has been a bad year; for me, I never got a chance to wet a fly, except for the mere sake of wetting it.

* * *

A correspondent asks me why I have called Charlotte Brontë 'a hysterical governess.' But when or where did I ever write such nonsense about 'the Vestal of Haworth'? If I err not, the accomplished Shirley brought this charge against me in *Good Words*. I read it with amazement, at Dingwall, and forgot about it. The only article that I ever wrote on Miss Brontë, I think, was in *Good Words*. Looking over it, I see that I did say she was a governess, and expressed the usual regret for the unhappy lives which are too often lived in that underpaid and difficult profession. One catches an echo of many laments in Miss Brontë's novels; her materials are inevitably derived from her experience. But I find nothing about 'a hysterical governess.' People have called Jeanne d'Arc 'hysterical'; genius and hysterics have points of contact. But I did not even say *that*, as far as I am aware, and if I am to be accused of doing so, by Shirley or anyone else, I must ask for documentary evidence. 'No other is genuine.' If the thing can be proved, I shall recant, and burn my faggot; if it cannot be proved, perhaps the myth will be withdrawn? Nobody can remember all the foolish things he may have written, but this particular folly, I fondly trust, is beyond my power.

A. LANG.

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